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CASH PRIZE CONTEST See Page 2

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

DETECTIVE STORIES

NOVEMBER 15, 1922 VOL. V No. 120

Feature Story

THE MOUSE TRAP

by Edith Sessions Tupper

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. V. NOVEMBER 15, 1922 No. 120

ISSUED TWICE A MONTH

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As evidence of our honesty we will print the names and addresses of the winners and the number of coupons they send in. The publisher of this magazine will be responsible for the correct count of the coupons, and guarantees prompt payment to the winners.

The feature story in our next number is entitled "A Radio Mystery," and was written by Captain Jack Static. There will also be a new two-part story, "Tracked by Inches," by Edward Lee Bennett, and a number of short stories such as "White Devil," by Herman Petersen; "Little Things," by Earl C. McCain; "Loaded Dice," by Henry J. Martin; a splendid article by Edwin Tarrisse entitled "How the Handcuff Men Work," and a large number of other interesting articles.

THE EDITOR.

The Mouse Trap

by Edith Sessions Tupper

CHAPTER ONE

HENRY DURAND was opening his mail. He sat at his desk in the library of his beautiul country home, "The Breakers," at South Haven, Long Island. There were at least a dozen letters to be gone over, but he had pushed all of them aside to give preference to one bearing an official stamp. This he opened and hurriedly read:

DEAR SIR: Your esteemed favor was duly received. I write to say that we will to-morrow send down the best detective we have on our staff to handle your affair. I beg to assure you that John Manning is one on whom you can absolutely rely. His ability is unquestioned and is equaled only by his discretion. His skill at solving mysteries is proverbial. I remain, sir,

Yours respectfully,

THOMAS BURNS.

Mr. Durand returned the letter to the envelope and sat for a time thoughtfully tapping the desk with it. "What a distressing affair," he ruminated, "that I should be so tormented at a time like this with my houseful of guests and Billy's marriage so close at hand. Well"—he drew a long breath—"all I can hope is that this man that they're sending down here will be able to straighten out matters. Let me see." He drew over a time-table and consulted it. "He should be in on that eleven-thirty train. It must be nearly that time now." He glanced at his watch. "By George, it's quarter of twelve," he exclaimed, "and there comes a taxi up the driveway now."

He rang for a servant, and presently a solemn English butler appeared. By this time the taxi was driving under the porte-cochere.

"Dawson," he said to the butler, "a gentleman is just arriving from New York. Show him in here at once, and, by the way," as the butler started to leave the library, "do you know where my son Billy is?"

"I think, sir," replied Dawson, "that Mr. William is in the rose garden with Miss Pearson."

"After you admit Mr. Manning," directed Durand, "please go and tell Billy that I want to see him for a few moments."

"Yes, sir."

The electric bell sounded throughout the house, and Dawson left the library to return and usher in Detective John Manning.

Mr. Durand, rising, cordially greeted the

visitor; he indicated a chair close by, which Manning accepted; then Durand seated himself and studied the man before him. He was well satisfied with Manning's appearance, perfect dressing and well-bred manner. "He will do decidedly," he thought; "he's got the presence to carry out the plan I have in view, and he surely looks as if he knew something." Aloud he said: "Mr. Manning, I'm very glad to know you; I have just read a letter from your chief in which he praises you very highly. I feel confident that you are the one to untangle this wretched riddle. I will state the case briefly. My son is about to be married. The young lady whom he is to wed has been brought up with my daughter Katherine. She has always lived with us, both her parents having died in her infancy. The wedding will take place here next week, Wednesday. My house is filled with intimate friends, who will remain here until after the marriage. You see the situation, Mr. Manning." Manning bowed slightly, and Mr. Durand resumed: "In the last week a series of astonishing thefts have occurred; valuable pieces of jewelry have mysteriously disappeared. Of course my guests are absoluetly above suspicion." He paused abruptly.

"Of course, of course," soothingly agreed Manning as he marked Durand's agitation. "What about your servants, sir?"

"I have had my servants for years," returned Mr. Durand. "My butler, Dawson, is unimpeachable. The women servants are strictly honest, so I can vouch for their integrity. The whole thing, Mr. Manning, is most distressing. I have not been able to sleep for the last three nights. Every morning I am told of a fresh disappearance of articles of jewelry. Now, what is to be done?"

"Find the thief, of course," replied Manning quietly.

"Yes, but how, Mr. Manning?"

"Leave that to me." Manning spoke with the utmost gravity. "Let me relieve you now of your worry. Give me a free hand in this matter and I will discover the culprit."

"Your words are reassuring," Durand answered. "But there is one thing, Mr. Manning, I must insist upon, and that is that there shall be no scandal. Should you become aware of the identity of the thief, everything must be arranged sub rosa. I cannot afford to have anything get into the newspapers at a time like this."

"I understand perfectly, sir," responded Manning. "Your orders shall be strictly obeyed."

"Another point," continued Durand. "You are now a member of my house party; in no way must your identity be disclosed. Dawson will see that you are made as comfortable as possible in every way."

Manning bowed in appreciation.

At this moment Billy Durand burst into the library. He was a pink-cheeked, happy-go-lucky young fellow, immaculately clad in flannels, bareheaded and carrying a big rose, which he had just plucked in the garden.

"Dawson said you wanted me, dad," he began, then stopped short, staring with big round eyes at Manning, who had risen from his chair and stood looking at young Durand as if he had seen a ghost. "Why," panted Billy, "upon my word it is—it can't be—yet it is—John Manning." He literally flung himself upon the other, shaking his hand, slapping him on the shoulder, seemingly overjoyed. Manning returned his almost affectionate greeting with great feeling. Mr. Durand stood absolutely dumbfounded at this unexpected scene.

"Upon my word," he managed to gasp, "you two fellows seem to know each other."

"Know each other!" cried his son, beaming. "Well, rather, dad. Why, I knew Manning at college. He was a senior when I was a soph, and we were the best of pals. After he graduated I lost sight of him, and here the old fraud turns up in your library. Gee! It's given me heart failure."

"Oh, so you were a 'varsity man?" asked Mr. Durand, conscious of a feeling of increased respect for his guest.

"Yes," replied Manning, "I am very happy to see your son again. I did not know that the boy I knew at college was any kin to you. In fact, Mr. Durand, I did not even know you had a son."

"Well," remarked Billy, "you know it now, old chap, and that dad has a son of whom he may be proud. Eh, Governor?" Mr. Durand smiled indulgently at the boy.

"Billy, my boy," he said, "I'm going to take you into my confidence; and remember this must not be breathed to any one, not even to Millie"—shaking a warning forefinger—"you understand?"

"Gee," cried Billy, "this sounds awfully mysterious. What's the idea, dad?"

"Mr. Manning is here on business," his father continued. "Although he is to be treated absolutely as a guest, no one must dream of his real errand."

"Well, why shouldn't he be treated as a guest?" hotly demanded young Durand. "We ought to be proud to have old John here—well, rather."

Here Manning spoke with his customary sangfroid.

"You don't understand, Billy," he said; "I am here in an official capacity. I have been assigned here on duty."

"Assigned—on duty?" the boy repeated, glancing from his father to Manning in perplexity. "I don't get you."

"Well, you see, Billy," Manning went on, "your father is upset over repeated thefts in his house, and I have been sent here to help him to discover the thief."

Billy got red in the face.

"But"—he stammered—"but why should you be sent here?"

"Because I am a detective," Manning said simply.

For an instant Billy gazed at him with dropping jaw; then leaping up again, he slapped Manning on the shoulder.

"By George," he shouted, "isn't that fine! I might have known, as you were always keen on crime. Why, I remember, dad, that Manning used to spend all his spare time studying Gaborian and other theories which applied to every newspaper mystery. Of course, Manning, you would be a detective. It's perfectly natural. I supposed you were doing it just for the fun of the thing at college. Criminal investigator, eh?"

"No," said Manning proudly. "I am earning my living, Billy. Soon after I left college my father committed suicide. He had lost all his property and could not face the future. I had a mother and sister to support, and naturally turned to that which most interested me."

There was a profound silence in the room for a moment, then Mr. Durand rose from his chair and, without speaking, stretched his hand to Manning. Billy got up, and walked over to the window and blew his nose violently; then he returned and threw his arms affectionately about Manning's shoulders.

"We are tickled to death," he said jovially, "to have you here in any capacity, aren't we, dad?"

"You're right, Billy," returned Mr. Durand as he resumed his seat at the desk. "And now, Mr. Manning, what do you want to do first?"

"I should think a very good plan," suggested Manning, "would be first to examine the servants. I have a theory, Mr. Durand, which put into practice has seldom failed. A thief may control his eyes and the expression of his face to a great extent, but the voice invariably betrays him."

"The voice," exclaimed both father and son, greatly interested.

"Yes," responded Manning, "I can usually tell a thief by his voice."

"How, Manning?" cried Billy excitedly.

"Well, there is a certain quality," Manning rejoined; "I can scarcely define it. It's something false, metallic. It doesn't ring true. It's very plausible. Oh, yes, a thief is always eager to explain, to suggest, to want to help you; too eager, in fact. If you like we will put the matter to a test at once. I have only seen your butler; he looks thoroughly trustworthy. Let me take a seat over there, with my back to the door and a book in my hand, in which I am supposed to be deeply engrossed; then you, Mr. Durand, summon one servant after another and ask them if they know anything of these thefts. I think I can tell you whether they are honest by the sound of their voices."

"I say, dad"—Billy was intensely interested—"that's a great idea. Try it. Have Duncan in first, then the women servants and the chauffeur."

Mr. Durand considered deeply for a moment. "All right," he said, "we will make the experiment. He at once rang for Dawson.

CHAPTER TWO

MANNING'S plan was carried out. The chauffeur and all the other servants had been questioned, and not the slightest light had been thrown on the mysterious thefts. Manning declared that the readiness of the servants to have their rooms searched was strongly in their favor. He also stoutly maintained that he had not once caught a false cadence in one of their voices. It was now luncheon hour, and Manning was shown to his room to prepare to meet the other guests. Shortly after he had made some changes he descended the great stairway and was presented to a group of people, all of whom greeted him with interested cordiality.

"Oh, joy, a new man?" Pinky Ives, one of the guests, whispered; "and a ripping good-looker, too. Me for a dead set at him."

The young men at once surrounded Manning. "Are you in on our tennis this afternoon?" asked Lionel Drayton, another guest.

"Why, you see, Mr. Drayton," Manning responded, "I'm no tennis player. Years ago at college I indulged a bit, but I'm too seedy now."

"You play golf, perhaps," suggested Herbert King.

"No," Manning replied. "I really haven't the time."

"I'll wager," said Lionel briskly, "that Manning plays a rattling good game of poker."

"Eh, what?" and everybody laughed at this, and especially at Manning's reply.

"I am not going to give myself away on that point; however, I'll say this much, that I haven't played a game in three years."

"Well, what do you do?" asked Pinky Ives with exaggerated amazement.

"I study human nature, Miss Ives," Manning quietly answered.

"Don't you find that awfully stupid?" demanded Pinky, giving him a flirtatious glance from under her long lashes.

"Oh, no," rejoined Manning. "On the contrary, it is very interesting, and at times quite startling."

At this moment two ladies descended the stairway arm in arm. Kitty Durand was chatting animatedly with her friend Mrs. Leslie Coleman. So absorbed were they in their conversation that neither saw the newcomer until they had reached the landing on the stairway; then both observed John Manning at the same time. They paused abruptly, gazing down in utter bewilderment. Kitty Durand saw a man she once met, of whom she had often thought, and for whom at various functions she had looked in vain. Her heart beat to suffocation. How came he here? was her thought. But, like the well-poised girl she was, she quickly controlled her emotion, and went on down to greet the new guest. When her father presented his "friend Mr. Manning" Kitty murmured a welcome, taking the precaution not to speak before the throng of guests of having met him before.

As for Manning, his head was in a whirl as he bowed low before the charming girl who had once given him a rose at a social function where he was stationed in the discharge of his duty.

Leslie Coleman remained for a moment or two on the landing. She was a born actress and dearly loved the centre of the stage. She stood a striking figure in a wonderful mauve gown smiling down at the people.

"Hello, folks," her voice rang out. Every one turned and looked up at her. "What have you people been doing all the morning? I hope you've discovered the thief. Now I have to report the loss of my amethyst chain. It is gone, bad luck to the highwayman!"

At the first sound of her voice Manning had stiffened like a pointer discovering his quarry. He did not even glance up at the lady, but kept his gaze studiously on the

rug at his feet. Her voice had a false ring that jarred on his nerves.

Mrs. Coleman came on down now, daintily thrusting out her beautifully shod little feet.

"I got a letter from Bob Dalton this morning," she cried. "He'll be down tonight in time for dinner. We'll all be glad to see him, won't we? He's such an addition to our party. Don't you think so, Kitty?"

Kitty's reply was inaudible as she led the way into the dining-room, but the expression on her face revealed to Manning's astute eyes that she was not at all pleased with Mrs. Coleman's news.

CHAPTER THREE

THAT afternoon Manning, at Kitty's invitation, walked with her in a wonderful rose garden. June, the month of roses and brides, was clothed with smiling skies, and breathed perfume upon the balmy air. The conversation at luncheon had been purely impersonal, but when the two entered the pergola, overhung with wonderful climbing roses, Kitty broke the ceremonial ice by saying:

"What a very extraordinary thing that you and Billy should have been at college together, drifted so far apart, and then have met once more. How strange you did not see him the night I first met you, and how is it that you knew daddy and did not realize that he was Billy's father?" Here was a poser. Manning had to think quickly.

"You see, Miss Durand," he fumbled, "I have only a slight business acquaintance with your father, and did not associate his name with that of my old college friend."

This explanation was a trifle lame, but Kitty, being so overjoyed to again meet the man who had made such an impression upon her, scarcely heeded its incongruity.

"I have looked for you at many functions since our meeting," she said, "and wondered why I never saw you. You are so serious-minded I fancy society does not appeal to you."

"Well, as to that," replied Manning, "I am not a society man, Miss Durand, but society is a wonderful thing. Imagine a country in which there was no society, but simply a mass of barbarians. Wealth, distinction and position must of necessity stand apart from the ordinary people."

"Still, there are some awful common people in society," observed Kitty sagely. "I often wonder at some of the creatures who push their way in."

"Oh, undoubtedly," Manning replied. "There is always a black sheep in every fold; vulgar upstarts and even criminals work their way into exclusive circles."

"Speaking of criminals," said Kitty, pulling in a branch of roses and plucking a lovely blossom, "we have a thief in this house, Mr. Manning."

"Oh, impossible!" cried Manning, pretending to be startled.

"Yes," said Kitty. "Every day something of value disappears in the most mysterious fashion. You heard Mrs. Coleman say that her beautiful amethyst necklace has vanished. Many of the other guests have lost ornaments, too, but thus far I have escaped; probably it will be my turn next."

"I sincerely hope not," Manning said. He regarded the dainty, girlish figure beside him, clad in charming sport things, inhaling the odor of a gorgeous crimson rose. How sweet, how fair, how lovable she was. He resolutely turned his gaze away.

"Are you fond of flowers, Mr. Manning?" The little witch shot him a sidelong glance.

"I love flowers dearly," he said, "especially roses."

"Roses are my favorite flowers, too," Kitty returned. "I love the American Beauty; don't you, Mr. Manning?"

"It surely carries off the palm for loveliness," he said, "and its perfume, even after it is faded and withered, remains in one's memory."

There was a silence for a minute; then Kitty, being in one of her most tantalizing moods, murmured:

"What do you know about the perfume of a withered rose?"

For answer Manning took from his breast pocket a small flat notebook and, opening it, displayed the rose she had given him on the night of the ball when he first met her.

"Oh, oh," chided the little minx. "I fancy many girls have given you roses, Mr. Manning."

"Possibly," he responded gravely. "But this, Miss Durand, is the only one I have ever kept."

Kitty's cheeks took a hue as crimson as the flower she held in her hand. She flashed him a luring smile.

"Now," she said, "I'm going to reward your loyalty. Permit me." She thrust the flower in the lapel of his coat. The fair head and the dark one were close together at this moment, and every nerve in Manning's big body thrilled at her proximity.

"Thank you," he managed to say, and rising he crossed the pergola, looking out upon the garden, at the far end of which he saw Leslie Coleman strolling with one of the men guests.

From under her long lashes Kitty watched him with a significant smile.

"He likes me all right," she mused, "and I admire his reticence and self-control. How he could love if he should once give way! It's the business of my life to bring that about, Kitty Durand, for you are in love."

"Mrs. Coleman is a very stunning woman." Manning spoke in a tone of profound admiration."

Kitty was piqued. Here she was thinking of him, and he was admiring another woman. That was not to be endured. Rising, she joined him. "Do you think so?" she indifferently asked.

"She has a wonderful figure and presence," Manning continued; "she surely knows how to dress. That lavender gown suits her to perfection."

"Oh, yes." Kitty was getting a trifle angry. "She manages to gloss over the ravages of time very well."

Manning was secretly amused.

"She is very well-preserved for a woman of her years," he remarked suddenly, realizing that he was treading on dangerous ground. This admission mollified Kitty.

"I fear I am rather catty," she remarked, "but I tell you frankly, Mr. Manning, I do not like Mrs. Coleman. She intends to marry daddy if she can get him. I do not want her for a stepmother."

Manning smiled down at the lovely mutinous face.

"I can understand that, Miss Durand," he answered.

"Besides," Kitty went on, "Mrs. Coleman does not ring true. She is false; is always posing; one can never find her real self, if indeed she has one." By this time Mrs. Coleman and her escort were nearing the pergola. She saw Kitty and Manning, and waved to them. "Come," said Kitty in an undertone, "let us return to the house; I am not in the mood to talk to her." Thereupon they left the pergola and sauntered back through the tennis court, where the young people were flying about in pursuance of their game. As they entered the hall Dawson met them.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Manning," he said, "Mr. Durand sends his compliments and asks will you be kind enough to join him in the library."

Clad in a girlish, filmy white chiffon gown, Kitty went down quite early to give some last directions to Dawson before the dinner hour. As she emerged from the dining-room a taxi drove up and Robert Dalton stepped out. Although Kitty detested him, she was perforce obliged to welcome him as her father's guest with a show of cordiality. Dawson vanished in the dining-room, and Kitty found herself alone with the man she thoroughly disliked. They stood before the fire, for although it was June the evenings were damp, and Dalton's bold eyes surveyed her appraisingly.

"You're looking very charming to-night," he said with his customary fulsome manner. The girl flushed. She hated his compliments.

"Won't you sit down?" She indicated a seat. "Or do you prefer to go directly to your room? I will have Dawson show you." She went to cross the hall to ring for Dawson, but Dalton caught her hand in both of his.

"Wait a moment," he urged. "Let me have a few words with you before you banish me. I never get a chance to speak to you alone; you always avoid me.

"Please let go my hand," said Kitty haughtily. But Dalton only held it the tighter.

"Oh, come now, little Lady Disdain"—he was trying to draw her toward him—"why be so cold, so petulant? You know how I worship the ground you walk on——"

"Stop, I beg you," cried Kitty. "I do not care to hear you say such things."

"But you shall hear them," retorted Dalton, the bad character in him getting the upper hand. "I'm not always to be played with, Kitty."

"I am not playing with you," cried the girl. "You know that I care nothing for you."

"But you're going to care for me," Dalton replied, furious at her frigidity. "I shall teach you to care for me; I shall make you love me." He caught her fiercely in his arms.

"Let me go, let me go," the girl panted as he bent his head to kiss her.

"No, you sweet, provoking little thing. I will not let you go until you kiss me and then tell me you are going to try to love me."

Kitty struggled frenziedly. "You beast!" she cried. "How dare you?"

"Oh, I dare," Dalton laughed, "and you like it; you know you do. Every woman likes to be caressed by the man who loves her." His lips were now almost on hers.

Manning, dressed for dinner, was slowly descending the great stairway when he heard voices below and the sound of a woman's imploring accents. Pausing abruptly on the landing, he gave one glance over the rail. In another instant his hand gripped the collar of Dalton's coat, and he tore him away from the girl and flung him halfway across the hall, where he sprawled grotesquely on the floor. Kitty sank, a little, sobbing, disheveled figure, on the nearest chair. Manning went over to Dalton and gave him a contemptuous kick with his foot.

"Get up, you cad!" he ordered. Dalton, glaring like an enraged animal, slowly rose.

"How dare you interfere?" he snarled. "What are you doing here?"

"None of your damn business," muttered Manning in an undertone. "Take yourself off to your room and see that you don't annoy Miss Durand again."

Dalton realized the wisdom of Manning's advice. He knew that he had committed a gross breach of manners, and in shamefaced fashion rose and sneaked up the stairs. By this time Kitty had somewhat recovered her composure and was wiping the tears from her flushed face.

"Thank you, Mr. Manning," she murmured; "how fortunate you happened to come. That horrible man; I hate him! I loathe him! He torments me, but he is daddy's friend and associated with him in business. He is determined to marry me, but I would die first." Her tears began to flow afresh.

"Do not cry." Manning spoke in a low, tense voice. "I beg you, Miss Durand, don't give way. Some of the guests may be coming. Had you not better go to your room and compose yourself before any of the house party meets you?"

"Yes," agreed the girl. "You are right; thank you for reminding me." She held out a trembling hand, which Manning took. "How sensible you are," she said; "how strong!"

The eyes of the two met for an instant. Manning bent and kissed the trembling little hand; then the girl darted like a deer up the stairs. Manning stood gazing in the fire for a few seconds, then with a long deep sigh flung himself into a spacious armchair before it. Closing his eyes, he sank into a revery. He saw once more the beautiful face enhanced by tears of shame. He felt again the clinging of the rose-leaf fingers. How sweet, how far apart from him she was.

"Dreaming, Mr. Manning?" asked a gay voice. With a start he opened his eyes. Leslie Coleman in a gorgeous emerald-hued satin gown stood smiling down at him.

CHAPTER FOUR

THAT night a terrific wind swept up from the ocean, bringing with it a tempest of rain, which continued all the next day. There was no going out for golf, tennis or strolls. After breakfast every one crowded about the huge fireplace in the hall, told stories, played cards and grumbled at the weather. About noon an express van arrived with packages for Millie Pearson, and several of the women guests at once grew very mysterious and hastened upstairs to the coming bride's boudoir. The men remained below chatting and smoking and wondering what was up. Some time elapsed when the voice of Kitty was heard from the top of the stairway.

"Behold the bride!" she exclaimed. Every one started and looked up. Millie stood on the stairs clad in a surperb white satin bridal robe, a floating, filmy veil, and clusters of orange-blossoms about her shapely head. Kitty stood at her side, smiling in mischievous glee, and Pinky Ives peeped over their shoulders to watch the effect upon the men. The three formed a charming picture.

"Isn't she adorable?" cried the prospective bridegroom.

Kitty shook a warning finger to her impetuous brother as he started up the stairs and cried:

"Go back, go back, you shan't rumple her frock. We only allow you a peep." She caught Millie's hand and led her out of sight. Pinky came on down the stairs and Billy Durand returned to his seat quite crestfallen.

"It's a shame," he grumbled. "Kitty should have let her come down."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when confused cries came from above, as if some one were in great alarm. In another moment Kitty came flying down the stairs, white as death, beating the air with her hands.

"Daddy, daddy," she panted. "My pearls! my pearls!"

Mr. Durand sprang from his seat and caught his agitated daughter in his arms.

"What is it, Kitty?" he demanded. "What about the pearls?"

"They are gone." Kitty caught at her throat and seemed on the point of fainting.

"Gone?" every one echoed blankly.

"Yes," she managed to articulate. "I had taken out the string, and was going to put it about Millie's neck, and in the excitement I forgot it—and left it lying on my dressing-table. You know we weren't on the stairs five minutes. In that time some one entered my room and took the necklace. Oh, daddy!" she sobbed aloud on her father's breast. Every man there was moved by her manifest distress and looked at his neighbor and swore softly under his breath.

"There, there, dear." Mr. Durand petted and soothed his daughter tenderly. "Don't give way; don't, my child. We shall find them for you, and if not daddy will get you a new string."

"A new string wouldn't be mother's pearls," Kitty sobbed. "Oh, daddy, what are we to do? Who is the thief in this house?"

Dalton, who was present, stood looking down at the burning coals in the fireplace with a curious expression on his blasé face, and Manning had gone to the window and stood looking out at the driving rain. By this time Millie, having doffed her bridal robe, came down the stairs, followed by two or three others of the women guests. All were excitedly chatting about this fresh loss.

"What is this I hear?" called a melodious voice, and Leslie Coleman now came trailing her laces and frills down the stairs. "Kitty's pearls gone? Impossible! What a shocking affair!" She had now reached the weeping girl and laid a caressing hand upon her shoulder. "My darling child, don't grieve so," she murmured. "But there, I know how you feel. I was nearly beside myself when I discovered the loss of my amethyst chain. Of course the same person that got that has your pearls."

Manning turned slowly from the window and joined the group about Kitty. He spoke very gently.

"Mrs. Coleman is undoubtedly correct in her theory," he said. "Don't be so dis-

tressed, Miss Durand; every one here sympathizes deeply with you. It's only a question of time when this riddle will be solved."

Kitty lifted her head from her father's breast and smiled at him through her tears. There was something so calm and confident in his manner that some way the girl at once felt reassured. She soon recovered her poise, and the incident passed by.

Mr. Durand spoke to Manning, asking him to come in the library.

When the two men had taken their seats in that room Durand opened a drawer in his desk and, taking out a package, removed the paper, disclosing a beautiful velvet case. He pressed a spring, the lid flew back, and disclosed a magnificent ruby and diamond bracelet, fit for a queen. The gems sparkled brilliantly up at Manning as he bent over the case, which Durand extended to him.

"That, Manning," he said, "is my wedding present for Millie. I have not shown it to any one. To tell you the truth, I've been afraid to. I don't want it stolen. It's a shame about those pearls. They were my wedding gift to Kitty's mother and cost me twenty-five thousand. Of course it's the sentiment of the thing; you understand, Manning."

"Surely," was Manning's comment.

"If you can get those pearls back," continued Mr. Durand, "there isn't a favor on earth I wouldn't do for you. Do you know, I can see my young wife now as I clasped that string around her neck." He paused abruptly and choked back his emotion with difficulty.

"Don't worry, Mr. Durand," Manning said quickly. "I'll get them back. About this jewel, sir; you say that you have not shown it to any one. Now, let me advise you. This evening after dinner bring that bracelet into the dining-room and display it freely to every one."

Mr. Durand looked at Manning in absolute stupefaction. "Do you think that is a wise plan?" he asked.

"It is the only thing to do, Mr. Durand," returned the detective. The eyes of the two men met.

"Do you mean to tell me," Durand spoke reassuredly, "that you suspect one of my guests?"

"I regret to say that I do," bluntly responded Manning. Mr. Durand leaned back in his chair and drew a long breath. "Well, I'll be hanged," he said. Then, suddenly rousing himself: "Mr. Manning, it can't be. Why, my guests are all ladies and gentlemen; people of that class don't steal."

"If all thieves," said the detective composedly, "were of the lower classes we should find no bank wreckers and Sunday-school superintendents in the penitentiaries." Mr. Durand hesitated before putting the next question. "Do you—have you—picked out—any one as the possible culprit? The moisture was now standing thick on his brow and his hands trembled slightly.

"I am sorry to say I have every reason to suspect one person," was Manning's reply.

"Who—who is it, Manning?"

The detective murmured a name.

Mr. Durand recoiled as if Manning had struck him.

"Impossible! Mr. Manning, that is an absurd theory."

"I know how this must shock you," continued the officer, "but if you will let me work this out I shall prove my theory. It shall be done in the most diplomatic way possible, and absolutely under cover. This bracelet, sir, shall be my trap. I shall lead the thief into it. That is why I wish you to display it openly."

"I wanted to surprise Millie with it," Mr. Durand objected.

"You will," returned Manning coolly. "She will be just as surprised to-night as she would be the morning of the wedding, and if it's going to be stolen, Mr. Durand, it's better that it should be at once, instead of just before the ceremony."

"Possibly you are right," Mr. Durand answered. "But after displaying it, what then is your plan?"

"I want you to say before all your guests that you are going to put it away for the night. Come from the drawing-room directly into the library and put it in your desk. Your part in setting the trap is then done. I shall ask permission to remain here

all night." He rose and, crossing, indicated a door. "Where does this door lead to?" he asked.

"That is the gun closet," replied Mr. Durand wonderingly. "There Billy keeps his rifles. He has quite a collection. Open it." Manning obeyed and glanced in. It was a good-sized closet, with one small window high up in the wall.

"This is all right," he said, and he closed the door and returned to the desk. "When all retire to-night," he continued, "I will quietly leave my room and come down the servants' stairway, which I will admit I have already located. I will sit here before the fire, with no other light in the room, and wait developments. We shall have baited the trap. Who knows but that we may catch the mouse?"

"But there must be no scandal," urged Mr. Durand, rising, putting the jewel casket back in the desk. "No scene, no explosion of any sort."

"Absolutely no!" returned Manning. "You may rely on my discretion; I have handled such cases before."

CHAPTER FIVE

AFTER dinner that evening there were music and dancing and bridge in the drawing-room. At the tables the stakes ran rather high, and Leslie Coleman lost repeatedly. Robert Dalton was at the same table, and occasionally remonstrated with the lady in jocular fashion.

"Lookout now, Leslie," he said. "You're plunging again; you know your failing."

Rather nettled, Mrs. Coleman retorted:

"Let me alone, Bob; I know what I'm about. Who appointed you my censor?"

"All right," replied Dalton. "It's your own business, of course. I hate to see you lose like this."

"You've suddenly grown very tender-hearted," observed Mrs. Coleman dryly. "Can the leopard change his spots?" To which Dalton replied with a short, harsh laugh.

Manning had been standing back of Mrs. Coleman's chair watching the play. Leslie was radiant to-night in a wonderful scarlet chiffon gown, which set off her Spanish type to perfection. She was moreover in a very flirtatious mood, and repeatedly glanced up at Manning with seductive smiles. Manning in his turn played the gallant to perfection. From the other side of the room Kitty watched the two with a strange tightening of her heart. What did it all mean? she asked herself. Why had he not come near her all the evening, but had instead hovered constantly about the fascinating widow? Did he really like Leslie Coleman? She realized that all men were magnetically drawn to this dashing, worldly woman, but that this man should be attracted was intolerable.

Suddenly Manning turned away from the card table, looked about the room, saw Kitty sitting by herself on a divan and, crossing, drew a chair up near her. The girl was more like a dainty rose than ever in a pale pink frock. She was so sweet, so fragrant, so pure, so different from the scarlet and sandlewood lady he had just left—a being of another world, Manning thought.

"May I sit here a few moments and talk to you?" he asked. Kitty glanced at him from under her long curling lashes.

"If you think you can tear yourself away from the card table," she replied.

"I assure you," Manning said, "that the cards bore me to death."

"Indeed," returned the girl. "But Mrs. Coleman does not seem to bore you to death." Whereupon Manning laughed.

"No," he admitted, "she does not; she is a very interesting study, Miss Durand. It has been some time since I have met a woman so profounding interesting—that is, from a certain viewpoint." Kitty's heart sank at these words.

"Most men admire her greatly," she managed to say.

"Well, as to that," responded Manning, "I cannot say that I admire her, and still, in a way, I do. She is very clever."

At this moment Pinky Ives and Lionel joined them, and there was no further opportunity to discuss the breadth and depth

of Mr. Manning's emotions toward Leslie Coleman.

Mr. Durand, leaving a group of his guests, passed through the great archway into the adjoining library, taking pains as he went to swing the velvet draperies wide apart. Going to his desk, he took from the drawer the jewel case containing the ruby and diamond bracelet and came back into the drawing-room. Standing near the card-players, he spoke.

"I wonder," he said, "if you can stop playing cards long enough to see a little gift I have here for Millie." Every one at the various tables threw down their hands and turned in great excitement. All the guests had seen the magnificent chest of silver which Mr. Durand had given to the young couple, and equally every one knew that a munificent settlement would also be made. But now he had provided a little intimate surprise for his future daughter-in-law. All clustered about Mr. Durand as he leisurely opened the jewel case and displayed the regal gift, sparkling and flashing in its white velvet nest. A cry of delighted surprise burst from Millie Pearson. "Oh, Uncle Henry," she exclaimed, "is that gorgeous beauty really for me?"

For answer Mr. Durand lifted the ornament and clasped it on Millie's white arm. A chorus of ohs! and ahs! rose on every side. The jewel was critically examined and praised, and Mr. Durand's exquisite taste highly complimented.

Leslie Coleman was especially fulsome in her admiration. "You are the luckiest girl in the world," she told Millie. "Look at these pigeon-blood rubies. Why, they're worth a fortune! And the diamonds! What lustre! How white! How brilliant! Oh, Millie dear, do let me try it on."

The most gentle and amiable of girls, Millie Pearson, removing the bracelet, handed it over to Mrs. Coleman. The lady eagerly took it, and turning to Manning, who was standing near her, she said coquettishly:

"Come, Mr. Manning, put this on for me," extending her satiny arm as she made the request.

The detective took the jewel and slipped it over the lady's hand. As his fingers touched her arm Leslie Coleman gave a little shiver of delight. The man's touch thrilled her. She gave him a challenging glance, and met his large dark eyes regarding her with a curious expression. What was it? A glance of mingled admiration and something else, a look she could not fathom. "He likes me," she whispered to herself, "and he shall like me more and more." She held up her beautiful arm, from which the rubies flashed wickedly. "How well it goes with my gown!" she cried. "Isn't it gorgeous! Why, do you know, Mr. Manning," turning pointedly to him, "a woman would give her very soul for such jewels. Isn't it beautiful?"

Manning leaned close to her and murmured: "Which, Mrs. Coleman—the arm or the bracelet?"

Leslie gave him a perfect broadside from her alluring eyes and answered: "I suspect this John Manning to be a very dangerous person." Every one laughed—every one save Kitty, to whom the apparent flirtation between the dashing widow and the man she loved was fast becoming anything but a joke.

Mrs. Coleman reluctantly relinquished the bracelet, and Mr. Durand, placing it in its case, went back to the library. There was an immense pier glass at the end of the drawing-room. Leslie Coleman strolled over to it and stood before it, arranging her elaborate coiffure. This mirror was so placed that it reflected the interior of the library. She saw Mr. Durand place the casket in his desk. Suddenly a voice spoke over her shoulder.

"Why do you make yourself more and more bewitching?" it said. "Are you not satisfied with turning the head of every man you meet?"

Mrs. Coleman saw Manning standing directly behind her, looking at her still with that same inexplicable glance. She flashed him a dazzling smile. "Really," she said, "I am becoming afraid of you."

"Oh, don't say that," Manning whispered. "I am the most harmless person in the world, and," he added in a lower tone, "the most easily played upon by beauty."

"Flatterer," laughed Leslie, and, turning, she took his arm and strolled back to the others.

It was about one o'clock in the morning when Maning, slipping out of his room, took his way down the servants' stairs and stealthily stole into the library. The log was still burning in the fireplace, but the blaze was feeble and illumined the room but faintly. Manning was just about to unlock the door to the gun closet when he heard a soft footstep at the library door. He instantly dropped into a huge armchair in a dark corner, trusting to luck that he would not be discovered.

A woman came into the room and crossed to a table in a far corner, picking up a volume lying there. As she turned the dying glow from the fire fell across her face and figure, and Manning, to his intense astonishment, recognized Kitty Durand. The girl was enchanting in her dishabille. Her blond hair hung in two long plaits over her shoulders, and she had thrown over a filmy night robe a pink silk negligee embroidered with butterflies and birds. Her little bare feet, thrust in dainty pink bedroom slippers, peeped out from under the folds of her robe. At almost the same moment that Manning recognized her Kitty saw him. She uttered a faint exclamation of dismay, and Manning instantly rose and came forward.

"Don't be alarmed," he said quickly. "I couldn't sleep, and thought I would come down and sit here for a while and try to woo the fickle god called Morpheus."

It was a lame excuse, but in her surprise Kitty did not pay much attention.

"I, too, could not sleep," she said somewhat plaintively, "and stole down to get a novel I am reading. I fancied I might read myself to sleep."

"You must find your book very interesting," Manning said. "What is it?" He held out his hand as he spoke, and Kitty gave him the volume. Stooping, he read the title by the firelight, "The Heart of a Princess." He returned her the book.

"An enticing title," he observed. "Do you like the story?"

"Oh, yes," cried Kitty. "It is a charming tale."

"And wherein," asked Manning, "does the heart of a princess differ from that of any woman?"

"But you see it does not," cried Kitty ingenuously. "She loves like any woman; she is supposed to marry a prince for political reasons, but she rebels, you see, because she loves one of her subjects."

"Ah," responded Manning, "she loves beneath her station, then, but of course at the end she will be a sensible princess and marry her prince."

"Oh, I hope not," cried Kitty, clasping the book to her breast. "I couldn't bear that, Mr. Manning. It must end happily. If necessary I pray she may run away with her subject."

Manning looked intently at her. How sweet, how desirable, how far beyond his reach she was. The calm, cold man was suddenly profoundly stirred. Bending forward, he murmured: "You could love—like the princess." Kitty looked straight at him, her lovely soul in her eyes.

"Yes," she breathed, "I could."

The portieres were suddenly swept aside and some one came hurriedly in.

"Well, well," tinkled a metallic voice. "Upon my word, a rendezvous at midnight. How romantic."

It was Leslie Coleman.

CHAPTER SIX

KITTY started violently. Like all society girls, she had been brought up to avoid anything smacking of indiscretion. She suddenly realized the questionable position in which she had innocently placed herself. The thought that Leslie Coleman had discovered her in the small hours of morning, dressed as she was, alone with this man, terrified her. What she would not think—would not say! Kitty knew her venomous tongue only too well. However, the girl was a good fighter. She drew herself up haughtily and said:

"I could not sleep, Mrs. Coleman, and

came down to get my book. Mr. Manning was here by the fire, and I only stopped for a word or two."

"Yes," said Manning, "I, too, am suffering from insomnia. I thought if I sat here and smoked a bit that I might get sleepy. I was just going as Miss Durand came in."

"Very well explained," laughed Mrs. Coleman. "Kitty, dear, your negligee is most becoming. I suppose you are wondering why I'm down here," she added. "I left my little beaded bag somewhere in this room, and it contained memoranda of some shopping I must do in New York to-morrow. As I, too, could not sleep, I thought I would look over my list and add to it. Now let me see; I think I left it on this table." She rummaged a bit and then said: "No, it is not here. Oh, very likely I left it in the drawing-room. Never mind, I can get it in the morning. Come, Kitty, dear, I will chaperone you up the stairs. It will not do for you to be left alone with this exceedingly dangerous man." Her eyes flashed significantly at Manning. "Good-night, sir."

Manning thought very swiftly.

"Oh! I am going upstairs, too," affecting a yawn. He followed the ladies out of the library and up the main stairway. Bidding them good-night, he went in the direction of his room, but waiting until a turn in the passage hid him from their view, he again slipped down the servants' stairway and regained the library. This time he did not pause by the fire, but unlocking the door of the gun closet, went in. He locked the door behind him, raised the window to admit the air and, seating himself on a stool, waited.

Within a half-hour he heard footsteps in the library. He had taken the precaution to draw the key out of the door. Stooping now, he applied his eye to the keyhole. Some one had switched on the electric light. In a moment he saw a woman ransacking Mr. Durand's desk. She speedily found the velvet case, opened it and stood for a moment gloating over its contents; then switching off the light, she hastened from the room. Manning waited a few moments, then unlocked the gun-closet door and came out. He stood an instant smiling triumphantly.

"The trap worked," he said reflectively: "we have caught the mouse."

The next morning at breakfast Leslie Coleman announced that she was obliged to go up to New York on business. "I cannot understand," she remarked in a confidential tone to Kitty, "why my gift to Millie does not materialize. It was ordered at least a fortnight ago. I must attend to that; then I have a little necessary shopping. I shall try to return on the six o'clock train."

Manning looked up from perusing the headlines of the morning paper and said deferentially:

"What a fortunate thing! I'm obliged also to go to New York to-day and hope you permit me to be your escort, Mrs. Coleman."

Kitty's heart sank like lead. This was perhaps a preconceived plan. Leslie Coleman shot him a glance of meaning.

"Delighted, Mr. Manning," she exclaimed. "I loathe traveling alone; I always like a nice man to look after me."

"What train do you take?" asked Manning, glancing at his watch.

"I shall be ready for the ten-thirty," the lady replied, "and I shall cut short my breakfast now, Kitty, as I want to change clothes." She rose and left the room.

Kitty never knew how she got through that breakfast. She tried hard not to look at Manning, who read his paper assiduously, never glancing in her direction. The hot blood mounted to the girl's face as she recalled her midnight interview with this man. She played her difficult rôle up to the moment when the car drove up to take Mrs. Coleman and Manning to the station. Leslie was looking her best in a wonderful gray cloth and hat with gray plumes and a huge cluster of violets in her belt. "You look like a bride, Leslie," called Billy Durand as she came sweeping down the steps, her eyes glittering in triumph. Every one laughed. Manning with the utmost courtesy assisted her into the car and, seating himself beside her, called back:

"And do I look like a bridegroom?"

Amid shouts of laughter and all sorts of directions as to their behavior during the day the couple drove away.

Leslie Coleman found the detective the most devoted of escorts. He remained with her throughout the trip, never quitting her even for a quiet smoke. Leslie put forth every wile and fascination of which she was mistress to further allure this man, whom she now firmly believed was in love with her.

"I wonder if he has any money?" she questioned herself; "if so there's nothing further to be desired. He's perfectly stunning and has wonderful manners. I find him a little too grave and serious, but when that ice does melt there will be a conflagration. How I should like to see him give way. I am going to take him home with me to luncheon, and I foresee a very delightful hour or so."

On his part the officer was thinking.

"She has got the pearl necklace and bracelet with her. She's going to the city for the purpose of pawning them. I can't let her out of my sight until I get the jewels back. I think I'll suggest her lunching with me and see what develops."

When they reached the Pennsylvania station Leslie said with one of her most bewitching smiles: "Now, Mr. Manning, I know you have a thousand-and-one things to do and are anxious to get away from me as soon as possible, but I positively insist that you come and have a bit of luncheon at my home. After that you can go about your tiresome old business, and I will do my shopping. At four-thirty I will meet you at the station, and we can return together."

"That program sounds pretty good to me," Manning answered. "As a matter of fact, I have very little to do, only one or two insignificant plans to attend to."

Leslie's heart gave a triumphant thump.

"He wanted to come up with me," she thought, "and made his business an excuse. The man is madly in love with me."

"Have you anything in the house to eat?" Leslie said to the maid who admitted them. "If so serve a luncheon in the dining-room as soon as possible for this gentleman and myself and open a bottle of Chateau Yquem."

Leslie led the way into her library. It was a charming room, furnished in the most exquisite taste. A door led into an adjoining chamber, wherein Manning caught sight of a beautiful bed covered with pillows of lace and a dressing-table sparkling with crystal and silver. An alcove opened out one side from the library. Within this recess stood a broad divan heaped high with luxurious cushions. By its side was a taboret on which lay cigarette cases and ash trays. The detective's eyes quickly took in the location of the rooms. Heavy portieres partially screened the alcove and the bedroom; the only door from the library opened into the hall. Manning selected a seat near this door.

"You have a charming retreat here," he observed.

"Oh, it's a snug little place," returned Mrs. Coleman, "for one living alone. "Excuse me a moment while I remove my hat and coat." She started toward her bedroom.

"I must not allow her to go in there," darted through Manning's consciousness. He rose and swiftly barred her way.

"Permit me to remove your coat," he said gallantly." The lady gracefully submitted. He adjusted the garment deftly over the back of the chair, and smiled tenderly at her. "Let me take off your hat," he added, throwing all the fascination he could bring into his low, eager accents. Quickly he pulled out the long pin and lifted her hat with the utmost care, depositing it on the library table. Leslie laughed.

"What a charming husband you would make!" she said. "I wonder would you wait upon a wife in this fashion?" Manning flashed her a speaking glance.

"I should be devotion itself to one I loved," he responded. "It would be my delight to perform all these little delicate offices for the woman I loved."

Leslie put her hands up to her hair.

"I fear I am somewhat disheveled from my trip," she said, "and really should adjust my coiffure. Besides, I am positive I need a little powder on my nose and per-

haps just a touch of——" She patted her cheeks, uplifting her face perilously near to Manning's.

"I must not let her get in that room again," shot through his mind; "if I do she will secrete the things."

"You are absolutely charming as you are," he answered quickly; "you do not need any powder or rouge, and your hair is perfection, so do not waste one moment at your toilette."

"Heavens!" thought Leslie, "he is coming on bravely." She smiled coquettishly, and going into the alcove, fetched out a cigarette case. "Let us smoke before luncheon," she suggested, extending the case to Manning.

"With all my heart," he returned.

They smoked and chatted, Manning constantly growing bolder. At last he possessed himself of one hand sparkling with rings, examining it with critical admiration.

"You have a beautiful hand," he murmured, "so white—so soft—so kissable. Bending, he slightly brushed it with his lips. Leslie shivered with delight and their eyes met. Suddenly rising, Manning crossed to the door which led into the hall, closed it, locked it, put the key in his pocket and stood with his back against it.

Leslie, too, had risen, and stood smiling alluringly at him. "It's not necessary to lock the door," she said. "No one will disturb us."

"I want to feel we are quite alone," Manning replied. He took a step or two toward her.

"Why?" asked the lady. Her eyes were growing dangerous. "If it were after luncheon, Mr. Manning, and you had drunk my wonderful champagne, I should not be surprised at this highwayman attitude of yours, but it's not necessary to order me to stand and deliver my caresses. You must know that I am awfully fond of you, and I believe you are very fond of me." Manning was now directly before her. She placed both hands on his shoulders. "You brigand," she whispered, "you wish to kiss me, do you not?"

"You mistake, madam." The detective's tone cut like a whiplash. "I want no caresses—no kisses—from you."

Leslie recoiled as if he had struck her in the face.

"Why—why," she gasped, "what—then—do you want?"

"I want Miss Durand's string of pearls and the ruby and diamond bracelet you took from Mr. Durand's desk early this morning."

Manning's voice was like ice and his eyes were steel.

The woman sank into a chair. "What do you mean?" she asked faintly. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, yes, you do." Manning towered over her, still fixing his terrible eyes upon her. "You know perfectly what I mean. Hand them over without any further argument, as well as the other trinkets you have in your possession."

"He is another thief," Leslie Coleman thought. "He is going to rob me of these things. Perhaps he will kill me." She cowered farther in her chair. "Who—who are you?" she demanded.

For answer Manning turned back the lapel of his coat, showing her his badge.

"I am a detective," he said briefly. The woman leaped to her feet and caught at the chair back for support.

"A detective!" she panted. Then, rousing like an enraged tigress, she snarled: "You miserable low wretch, how dare you—how dare you make love to me? How dare you browbeat me? Open that door and get out of my house at once."

"Come, come," said Manning authoritatively. "This sort of thing won't work. Give me the loot now without any further fuss."

"I shall scream for my maid," Leslie cried, "and tell her to call a policeman."

"Oh, no you won't," he retorted. "An officer is the last person you want to see now, Mrs. Coleman. Come, give up the stuff."

"I won't," Leslie cried. "I haven't got the jewels. Oh, how I hate you!"

"Undoubtedly," grinned Manning. "But you have the swag and you've got to give it up. Do you wish me to lift this receiver?"

—he was standing near the library table, and placed his hand on the telephone as he spoke—"and summon a patrol wagon?" The woman stared at him aghast. She could not speak, but only moistened her dry lips with her tongue. Manning really pitied her at this moment. "Come," he added a little less sternly, "give up without any further fuss. I hate to use force," he said significantly; "that is always so unpleasant with a lady." His hand was still on the receiver.

Leslie Coleman realized that she was beaten. This man, whom she had thought to wind around her finger, was her master. She was absolutely at his mercy. A dreadful vision of a patrol wagon and a cell flashed before her. She pressed her hands over her eyes to shut out the horrible picture. "I—I can't—give them to you," she stammered. "I—I—can't—get at them."

"Go in the alcove," Manning ordered. She hesitated an instant, then strode toward the alcove and drew the curtains behind her.

Manning, listening intently, heard the rustle of silk, and smiled knowingly to himself.

Presently the woman emerged, keeping her face turned away as she approached him. Without one word she laid the string of pearls, the velvet case containing the bracelet and some smaller trinkets on the library table. Opening the case, Manning satisfied himself that the bracelet was there, then carefully placed the loot in the breast pocket of his coat. Then taking up his hat and stick, he unlocked the door and stood on the threshold.

"You will excuse me from lunching with you," he said courteously. "Oh, just one word of advice, Mrs. Coleman. You had better return to Mr. Durand's house, otherwise your absence might possibly cause some suspicion to rest on you. No one will know of this unfortunate affair save Mr. Durand and myself. "Good-afternoon, madam."

He was gone now. The wretched woman stared after him with agonized eyes for an instant, then huddled face downward on the floor.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LESLIE COLEMAN did not return to Mr. Durand's home that night, but phoned she would be down the next day. She had decided to accept the detective's advice, realizing only too well the connection there might be between her absence from the wedding festivities, the train of thefts, and the sudden return of the jewels.

Manning, however, went on the six o'clock train. He took a later train than had been planned in order to avoid embarrassment. On reaching "The Breakers" he found the guests dining. One glance about the board showed him that Mrs. Coleman was not there. To the jests and sallies of all that greeted his appearance he returned good-humored replies.

"But where is Leslie?" some one cried.

"Is she not here?" Manning asked in well-feigned astonishment. "I understand she was to come down on the four-thirty. I was unavoidably detained."

"My word!" cried Pinky Ives. "What if some one has run away with Leslie. What a calamity that would be!"

"She will probably be down on the nine o'clock," Mr. Durand said. "Don't worry about Mrs. Coleman. She is quite capable of taking care of herself."

After dinner the detective asked Mr. Durand to come into the library. Closing the door carefully behind them and veiling the archway to the drawing-room with heavy portieres, Mr. Durand took his seat at his desk.

"Well, Manning," he said, "I discovered after you had gone to town that the bracelet had vanished. At first I was almost beside myself with rage, and was full of reproaches to think I had been such a fool as to leave the ornament so exposed and unguarded. But gradually I recovered my self-control, trying to rely absolutely on your skill. You can't blame me for being so upset. I paid fifteen thousand dollars for that bracelet. It's no small matter to lose such a jewel as that."

"You haven't lost it, Mr. Durand," replied the officer unperturbably. He drew

the velvet case from the breast pocket of his coat and placed it on the desk. "There it is," he said.

For a second or two Mr. Durand gazed stupidly at the case; then, with shaking hands, he pressed the spring. The cover sprang back, revealing a blaze of red and white light. Mr. Durand turned and looked at the detective.

"Good Lord, Manning," he ejaculated. "You are a wonder. How did you do it?"

"I set my little trap, Mr. Durand," he said, "and I caught my mouse." Putting his hand in his pocket again, he drew out the long string of milky pearls and laid it down before the astonished eyes of his host. Mr. Durand was now quite overcome. The return of the pearls associated with the memory of his young wife caused a profound stir of emotion. He lifted them tenderly as the tears rushed to his eyes. He tried to speak, but could not. Extending his hand, he took Manning's and wrung it.

The detective now produced the smaller articles of jewelry which had disappeared from time to time. "I believe that's all, Mr. Durand," he said simply.

For an hour or more the two men discussed the affair from every viewpoint. Manning rehearsed in detail the painful scene in Leslie Coleman's apartment, and told Mr. Durand of the advice he had given the unhappy woman.

"My part in this wretched affair," he concluded, "is now finished, and there is no necessity in my remaining here any longer. I had best go up to New York on the eleven o'clock train, thereby precluding any further embarrassment to Mrs. Coleman. You can give any explanation you think best to your guests. No one knows of the theft of the bracelet. You might say that I found the other articles in a pawn-shop. Of course you would have to let them know that I am a detective, not a guest, and my presence here was for the purpose of an investigation."

"I think," Mr. Durand replied, "that perhaps it would be just as well for you to go to New York until the night before the wedding; then I shall ask you to return here, not in the capacity of a detective, but as my guest. I want you to be present at the marriage of your old college chum."

"That is extremely thoughtful of you," Manning responded. "I confess I should like to see Billy married, but your other guests, sir; they may object to meeting a detective on a social equality plane."

"Manning," Mr. Durand said thoughtfully, "I believe I'll not say anything at present about your employment. I shall quietly return these articles to their owners and beg them as a favor to me not to ask any questions. I believe that to be the wisest course. When Mrs. Coleman arrives I shall meet her as if nothing had happened. I will protect the poor woman against any scandal. She must have been in desperate straits. By the way, she stole her own amethyst necklace, didn't she?"

"Ah," quickly rejoined Manning, "that was only a blind, Mr. Durand. She is surely very clever. I can't but admire her. A great woman was lost in her."

"About the pearls," Mr. Durand said, laying his hand tenderly on them; "I shall simply tell Kitty that I have recovered them, but will keep them in my possession until after the wedding. Then I propose that you shall give them back to Kitty. Is this plan agreeable to you?"

"Mr. Durand, I intend to carry out your wishes in this affair," Manning returned. "Of course Miss Durand will have to be informed of my position. I have chafed somewhat under the thought that I was acting a part here, and I should very much prefer that your daughter should know absolutely who and what I am."

"Very well, Manning," his host replied; "I shall expect you back then on Tuesday." The two men rose. Durand laid one hand on Manning's shoulder. "Good-by, my boy," he said with deep feeling. "God bless you. Stephens will fetch around the car and drive you to the station."

"Very well, sir; I will go up to my room before Mrs. Coleman can arrive and slip away quietly."

The wedding in the beautiful little ivy-covered stone church was over. The hand-

some young bridegroom and his charming wife had departed on their honeymoon trip. The guests were gone; only Manning remained behind, as his host had requested. He sat now in the library smoking a cigarette and reading over and over a letter with a foreign postmark, which he had received a day or so previously. His head was still awhirl. He still gazed at its contents as in a dream. It could not be possible, he argued to himself, that he was actually reading such an astounding epistle. It was too much like a three-volume novel to be true. With a sigh he folded it, replaced it in its envelope and restored it to his pocket as Mr. Durand and Kitty entered the library. The girl was still wearing her maid-of-honor frock, an exquisite rose-hued affair of chiffon and silk, and hat garnished with roses varying from pink to other pastel shades. With her cheeks scarlet from excitement and her eyes shining like stars, she was like nothing so much herself as a beautiful dewy rose. "Wasn't it a lovely wedding, Mr. Manning?" she cried enthusiastically? "Did ever you see a handsomer pair? Oh, I hope they'll be so happy. I am so happy myself, not only over this delightful marriage, but also over the recovery of darling mother's pearls. Daddy told me that you knew they had been restored. Where are they, daddy, dear? I am so anxious to see them again."

For answer Mr. Durand unlocked a secret drawer in his desk and took out the long strand of lustrous white globes.

With a delighted cry Kitty put forth her hands to receive them, but, gently interposing, her father extended the pearls to Manning, who silently took them. Kitty looked from one to the other in genuine amazement.

"Kitty, dear," said Mr. Durand, "it is time for you to know the truth. I wish the man who recovered your pearls—to give them—back—to you." Her father spoke with some difficulty.

"Mr. Manning recovered the pearls?" the girl repeated incredulously.

"Yes, my dear," her father answered.

"But how—how—I—I—don't understand," faltered the girl.

"Miss Durand," Manning spoke intrepidly, "it is time you should know who and what I am. I am not a society man. I was not a guest here until yesterday. Your father invited me for the wedding."

The blood receded from Kitty's cheeks. Her eyes were like those of a frightened child. "Then — who — are — you?" She breathed the question rather than spoke it.

"I am a detective, Miss Durand," Manning replied quietly.

For an instant Kitty swayed like a flower breaking on its stem. Her father put his arm about her.

"Yes, daughter," he said, "Mr. Manning is a detective, and a mighty clever one. I engaged him to come here and investigate the thefts. I found to my surprise that he had been to college with Billy. We wished him to pass as a guest; no one was to know his identity. As a result of our plan all the stolen articles have been recovered, and I wished Mr. Manning himself to hand you your pearls." Manning silently extended the necklace, which Kitty took with trembling fingers.

"Thank you, thank you," she murmured. Her mouth quivered, and suddenly she burst into a passion of tears, turned and fled from the room. The two men saw her through the window as she crossed the portico and, darting down the steps, ran toward the rose garden.

"Poor child," said her father. "It's a great shock to her. I suppose she thinks a detective must of necessity be a roughneck."

"Yes," said Manning with a tinge of sadness. "She thought I was a gentleman, and now she is disillusioned. Mr. Durand," he suddenly burst forth, "I must go at once. I love your daughter, sir."

"Why, I know that, Manning," Durand spoke quietly. "Who could blame you? Any one would love Kitty. She is the most lovable thing on earth. Besides, my boy, I'm not a fool. I have seen the way you have looked at Kitty, and I have noticed the shy little glances she has given you. I saw suffering in her face when you were paying court to Leslie Coleman. She thought you were in love with her, and the

child was very unhappy. I don't want my little girl to be unhappy."

"But, Mr. Durand," cried Manning, "what possible hope is there for me? There is a gulf between us."

"Is your heart so set on detecting?" asked Mr. Durand, "that you couldn't be persuaded to take up some other position?"

"No," Manning answered, suddenly seeing a great light. "Can you show me a way to change?"

"I am very sure I can—a way which will bridge over the gulf of which you speak. Now, my boy, you have my consent to seek Kitty. You will find her in the rose garden. She has taken her pearls with her, so go and speak to her and clasp those pearls about her neck as years ago I clasped them about her mother's throat. Every pearl speaks of faith and trust and of undying love."

Manning took from his pocket the letter he had been studying. "Will you read this?" he asked. "This may help some in gulf-bridging."

Wonderingly Mr. Durand opened the missive and read it.

"Go on, my boy." Durand shook Manning's hand. "It's all plain sailing now. But remember I gave my consent before I knew you were inheriting a huge fortune."

"I'll never forget your kindness," Manning retorted. He ran bareheaded through the portico across the lawn and entered the rose garden.

At the far end of the pergola he found a little dejected figure. She sat with tear-stained eyes, gazing at the strand of pearls in her lap. At the sound of footsteps she looked up and saw him coming smilingly toward her.

"Kitty"—he was beside her now—"your father sent me here. He knows that I love you. Can you overlook my position? Tell me, dear. Do you love the opinion of the world better than you love me?" He had both her hands in his and was gazing at her with impassioned, pleading eyes.

For only an instant did she hesitate. "No, John," she faintly murmured, "I love you more than all the world."

"We will go back now," said Kitty, rising; she held out the pearls as she spoke. "Please clasp them on for me, John," she spoke hesitatingly.

He obeyed.

"You know, Kitty," he said, "that you're facing a grave problem—marrying a detec——"

"Hush!" She put up a protesting hand. "Do not speak of that; I only wish to realize that I love and am loved."

"Come now, dearest," said Manning; "let us join your father; he has an interesting letter to read to you."

A PICKPOCKET'S HANDY TOOL

AMONG the curiosities which Chief Speers keeps in his desk at the central police station is a little pasteboard box filled with pieces of greenbacks. They are parts of five, ten, twenty, fifty and one hundred dollar bills. At the time they were mutilated they were part of a roll of $5,000 in the pistol pocket of a wealthy stockman. He was on a train coming into Kansas City, and when he got off at the Union Depot the pieces in the little box at the central station were all that was left of the $5,000. A pickpocket had cut his pocket, and in doing it had cut some of the bills, but he got all the rest. When Chief Speers shows the scraps of greenbacks he also shows a sample of the instrument used by the pickpocket who secured the $5,000 minus the bills which had been mutilated. It is a curious little round steel affair about six inches in length. The knife end of it is turned at right angles to the handle and is about one-half inch long. It is hammered as thin as paper and sharpened until it cuts cloth as noiselessly as it would butter. When a pickpocket locates a "roll" he watches his opportunity and cuts the pocket. With an expert it is the work of a moment. The instruments, the police say, are made exclusively for the profession and are of the very best quality of steel.

The Missing Bullet

by

Raleigh E. Ross

IN the stillness of his study sat Henri Rondeau, idly fingering his letter opener, a long, jeweled dagger. The action in the novel which was to have been his masterpiece had stopped abruptly. He had reached an impassé.

Henri looked gloomily into the starless night. The lights on the Municipal Pier had blinked out, and now only one remained on that broad expanse where lay Lake Michigan. This light to Henri represented one hope. As he looked down at the shining dagger he seemed to see where that hope lay.

"I must rid myself of all handicaps," he muttered. "Before I was married I could write. But now—bah!"

He regarded the slim, shimmering weapon with a melancholy fascination. It had been a wedding gift from one of his cousins in France. And ever since that day his art had grown more difficult. No new experience came to him, no fervor inspired his pen.

Slowly Henri arose and quietly switched out his desk lamp. He stood in the centre of the room a moment, listening to the mournful roll of the waves against the shore. They were running high to-night.

The house was still. Somewhere in the night tolled the funereal tones of a bell. Rondeau shivered as the last note died away.

"Twelve," he muttered; "just the hour for——"

Leaving the word unsaid, he glided out and down the thickly carpeted hall, pausing before a door near the head of the stairs. Regular breathing came from within. He quietly opened the door.

As he entered the room he could barely see the outline of a form in the big four-posted bed. He clutched his dagger tighter. Cold chills shook him.

"The first genuine wave of feeling since marriage," he told himself triumphantly. His novel would show the effects.

But this was not enough. He advanced toward the bed. A mist swam before his eyes. Before Henri had fairly realized what he had done he was outside the apartment, the dagger no longer in his hands.

Far below sounded the click of an elevator door and the whir of the cables. Henri fled down the stairway. Halfway down the second flight he paused, so that he could not be seen as the car shot upward. It stopped at the second floor above.

Was some one investigating already? Or was it one of the neighboring tenants? Henri rushed down the remaining seven flights and slipped out unseen.

Detective King, a ward man, entered the apartment with his usual alert air, though it was an hour past midnight.

A tall man who had been kneeling before a still figure in the big four-posted bed arose and faced the detective.

"Hello, Monty," said King genially. "I was hoping you'd be here. Is she dead?"

Doctor Jerome Montgomery nodded.

"She died instantly," he said. "The murderer must have had a knowledge of surgery or else was fortunate. She was stabbed in the heart."

King looked at the four other occupants of the room—the night clerk, a man in a purple bathrobe, the elevator boy and a policeman.

"Did you find all of these people here when you came, Tom?" addressing the policeman.

"All except the doctor, sir, and this boy, who brought me up. The doctor came in a few minutes ago."

"Who gave the alarm?" asked King.

"I did," replied the man in the bath-robe. "I phoned the clerk there."

The clerk nodded in confirmation.

"How did you discover this?"

The man looked perplexed.

"I don't exactly know," he replied. "Something woke me up. You see I have the next apartment. I lay there for about ten seconds, sure that something was wrong. Then this door slammed. I heard some one running for the stairway and downstairs. So I took the liberty of investigating."

"Did you hear anything besides the slam of the door?"

"The elevator was either going down or coming up."

"Have any of you moved anything here?"

They all shook their heads.

King approached the bed. He carefully examined the hilt of the dagger with a magnifying glass for fingerprints.

"You have not touched this, doctor?"

"No, Jim, it wasn't necessary."

Doctor Montgomery and James King were old classmates at the University of Chicago. They had worked on several cases together. However, it had usually been King who called the doctor instead of the other way around, as in this instance.

"You people wait in the next room," directed King, "all except Doctor Montgomery. Tom, you stand just outside the door and let no one enter unless the coroner arrives. First phone for the fingerprint man at headquarters."

When they were alone King glanced questioningly at the doctor.

"What's bothering you, Monty?" he asked.

"That," indicating a revolver which the dead woman still clutched in her right hand. "She fired a shot, yet no one heard it. And there is no sign of the bullet. I've looked all around the room."

King quickly disengaged the fingers from the weapon and examined it. It was a good thirty-eight caliber revolver of a well-known make.

"We must find that bullet," said King decisively.

Quickly but thoroughly the detective examined every part of the two walls opposite the bed. He scrutinized the ceiling. He even got down and examined every inch of the floor.

The doctor picked out the most comfortable chair and lit a cigarette.

"You won't find it," he said.

King finally snapped shut the case of his magnifying-glass and rose to his feet.

"No," he said, "that bullet is not in the room."

"Could it have gone out of the window?" suggested the doctor.

King glanced at the window, which was open about two feet.

"I doubt it," he said. "She must have fired at something. It could hardly have come in through a window nine stories up.

And she would not fire through the window intentionally."

"Hold up her head, will you, doctor?"

The doctor complied and King removed the pillow. Then he replaced it with a satisfied grunt. The impression of the revolver under the pillow was plain.

"She was awakened by something, removed this from under her pillow, and fired. Evidently she hit whatever she aimed at."

"Or it went through the open door," suggested the doctor.

"We'll examine the walls of the next room opposite the door and also the walls in the hall opposite the outside door, but I don't think that we will find anything."

The detective's prediction proved correct.

King next turned his attention to the desk. Going rapidly through the papers, he took only two letters, which he found among a bunch tied with an orange-colored ribbon. He had been forced to break into a secret compartment at the back of one of the drawers before he succeeded in finding the bunch.

"Come on," he said; "let's go before that sleepy coroner gets here."

At the door he stopped to give Tom instructions.

"Tell the coroner that nothing has been disturbed," he directed. "Keep these people in the next room for him to question."

The phone jingled sharply, and the night clerk answered.

"Some one wants you, Mr. King."

King stepped back into the room to the phone.

"Hello."

Then, in reply to what was said at the other end, King answered:

"All right. Hold him till I get there. I'll be right over."

Not until they were in the taxicab outside did King explain.

"They've arrested Henri Rondeau," he volunteered. "A patrolman saw him wandering around on the edge of Lincoln Park. He was hatless and in a smoking jacket, otherwise dressed in evening clothes."

"I wondered why you did not ask about Rondeau," said the doctor. "I know him well."

"So do I," said King. "I read his novels when I want to feel gloomy. And I worked on a case for him a while ago. Recovered his stolen car. He's an excitable little chap."

King relapsed into silence and took from his pocket a stick of gum. Absentmindedly stripping away the paper, he was soon chewing contentedly.

Montgomery, familiar with his friend's traits, said nothing. He knew that King thought hardest when he chewed gum. He was perhaps the only detective at headquarters who did not use tobacco in any form.

They drew up before the dingy police station, one of the relics of a previous decade. Before the ramshackle structure burned a solitary light. King was soon in conference with the desk man.

"Did you ask Rondeau whether he killed his wife?"

"Yes. He says he don't know. He claims his mind is blank about what happened from midnight to the time he was arrested. But he acts like he's lying."

"Let us talk with him," said King quietly.

Rondeau looked little like a successful novelist when the cell door was unlocked. He was sitting on a tiny bed, his small stature appearing more diminutive than ever.

"This is my friend Doctor Montgomery, Mr. Rondeau. I believe you know him slightly already?"

Rondeau nodded.

"Now tell us about your part in this night's affair."

"There's not much to tell," began Rondeau. "I've been working late recently. To-night about midnight something seemed to snap in my head. I went in to see if my wife was asleep. Something frightened me, and the next thing I knew a policeman arrested me in the park."

"You heard no noise as you left your wife's room."

"None."

"Is this your handkerchief?"

King suddenly thrust out a blood-stained

handkerchief with the initial "R" embroidered in blue in the corner.

Henri's face grew ashen. Then an expression almost fiendish came into his eyes. The doctor, watching him, was puzzled. It was not a look of fear.

"No, it is not mine. Where did you find it?" he mumbled.

In the entrance to your building as I was going in."

"It is not mine," repeated Henri.

In his further queries King came back to the handkerchief several times. But always his question was met with denial.

As they left the cell Henri sat in his old crouched position on the cot. But there was a difference. The dejection seemed to be gone. His body appeared to carry a hidden litheness like that of a caged tiger.

King shut the cell door carelessly. It failed to click.

The doctor stopped to give it another push. But King grabbed him by the arm and pulled him along.

"But it's not locked," protested the doctor.

"I know it," whispered King. "Talk lower, will you?"

The detective stopped for a short talk with the desk sergeant. Then he and the doctor went out, arm and arm.

Three o'clock. All was still in the station. The desk sergeant drowsed at his post.

A stealthy figure approached through the dark corridor. His cell door had been swung to until it appeared to be locked.

The stooping figure glided to the door which led into the main room. Escape that way was hopeless. The sergeant was half awake.

A door to Rondeau's right yielded to his light touch. He entered the empty room. Tiptoeing across to a window, he raised it and looked out cautiously. The street was deserted. Somewhere in the distance sounded the clatter of hoofs on the pavement. Doubtless the milkman's steed, the city's first herald of the dawn.

Quietly Rondeau put on his shoes, which thus far he had carried. Then he climbed out of the window and dropped to the strip of dirt beside the walk.

Keeping in the shadow, he scurried away. He was heading for Lake Shore Drive.

When King and Montgomery reached the street they dismissed their taxicab and crossed the street to a small park. King moved a bench into the shadow of a clump of lilac bushes, and they sat down.

"You don't care about any sleep to-night, do you, Monty?"

"No, I'm not worried," returned the doctor, "as long as the case unrolls. But why wait here?"

"I expect a man from the station shortly, and it's up to us to follow him."

"Rondeau?"

"Yes."

"You don't mean that you will let him escape!"

"Technically, yes, if he can manage to get away."

"Then you don't think that he did it?"

"I don't know. I wouldn't put it past the erratic little Frenchman. But there are certain things that point the other way. I'll admit, though, that I'm really playing a 'hunch.'"

"Well, you've got your nerve!" exclaimed the doctor. "If you let him get clear away by any chance and he's guilty, the police inspector will raise a pretty hubbub in the morning."

"I've posted the desk sergeant. We must keep within sight of him," said King quietly.

The moon sailed quietly on its course through the heavens, while the two friends waited in silence. The doctor was almost asleep when a question aroused him.

"Haven't you a friend named Jules Releaux?"

"He belongs to my club," replied the doctor sleepily, "but I hardly know him. Why?"

"Tall, powerful chap, isn't he?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

"No."

King would say no more.

The doctor was really dozing when a slight touch put him on the alert.

"Still, now. Pull your wits together. Our man just dropped out of the station-house window."

They gave him a good start and then prepared to follow.

"You shadow me," directed King. "Keep about one hundred yards behind, and see that no one spots you, least of all Rondeau."

The doctor nodded and King glided away.

Down through the friendly shadows crept pursued and pursuers, always eastward. Montgomery finally saw King climb a vine-covered fence surrounding private grounds. The house fronted on Lake Shore Drive.

"The home of Jules Releaux," muttered Monty in surprise.

Lights flashed in the house, and the sound of angry voices floated out on the early morning air. Monty rushed across the shadowy lawn and dashed up the steps and through the open front door. No need of stealth now. He knew that King was inside.

He burst upon a strange scene in the library. A physician whom Monty knew to be a friend of Releaux's was holding the little Frenchman by the arm. King had hold of the other arm, while Rondeau struggled like a madman to break away.

"Let me at him," he shrieked. "Just a moment. Then I'll go back."

On the lounge, his face pale as that of a corpse, lay the powerful surgeon, Releaux. Monty saw at a glance that he was dying.

He took his turn at holding Henri, while King advanced, the handkerchief in his hand.

"Do you care to say anything before you leave us, Doctor Releaux?" asked the detective.

The doctor nodded, but his lips would not move. He closed his eyes. "Life's poor play was o'er."

Henri had grown quiet as he watched.

The first physician released his hold and answered the detective's unspoken inquiry.

"Releaux has a bullet wound in the stomach. He had lost so much blood when he phoned that I could not move him to the hospital. I took the desperate chance of operating here. Here is the bullet."

King examined the leaden pellet, his practiced eye assuring him that it was from a thirty-eight caliber revolver.

"Our missing bullet, Monty," he said.

Then he removed two letters from his pocket, bound with an orange-colored ribbon.

"You doubtless knew of the affair between this man and your wife, Henri. Here are two letters written by him which you may wish to destroy. We have evidence enough without them. You are free to go where you will after we explain at the police station."

The Frenchman bowed. His feelings had certainly been torn enough that night. But his expression was one of triumph. "That man forestalled me in killing her and in destroying him," he exclaimed.

"I'd like to read his next novel," muttered King.

"I wouldn't," replied the doctor with a shudder. "That man must like to write with a pen dipped in blood."

Henri Rondeau strode briskly homeward after his discharge. When he went to bed he was glad that the shadows about his room could not accuse him of murder. His conscience was clear. As he went to sleep his last thoughts were not upon the night's happenings, but upon the tragedy which was to vitalize the next chapter of his novel.

The Ring That Chattered

By PETER PERRY

PART TWO

CHAPTER TEN

AN hour later Paul, bandaged and made comfortable in a high white bed, was able to tell his story to the officers.

"I was prowling about the grounds and had worked around toward the back, where there is a sharp drop to Charles street. I was near the east corner. The ground slopes off rather steep there, you know, and the hollow is filled with a thicket of Cherokee roses.

"Now, the top of the wall is level all the way around, so at the bottom of the descent it must be some twelve feet high, with the three-foot iron railing above that. I was within ten feet of the rear wall, moving as quietly as I could, when I heard a clinking noise—metal striking metal. It was repeated every few seconds. Something was being thrown at the iron pickets on top the wall, and it would rattle against them as it fell back. Some one was trying to get over the wall. I knew that I couldn't get any closer from the inside without being heard. And I don't see how any one could have got through that thicket. The fellow could have hidden there easily enough.

"I followed the east wall about fifty feet till I found a place where I could scale it. It was about six feet high there, and I could easily grasp the iron pickets and pull myself up. I knew there was no time to be wasted, and every second was precious. It was the distance of the block to a gate and a guard. And I thought I could handle the fellow by myself. I climbed the wall and dropped to the sidewalk. When I turned into Charles street I kept close against the wall and moved along it to the point where I heard the noise. It was still being repeated at short intervals.

"Some one was trying to ring a picket. Occasionally I could see the flash of the ring tied to a wire as it was thrown over the top of the iron railing. The fellow was awkward at the job, but it was a small ring. I am sure it was the ring which disappeared from the chest of drawers in Adam's room, and that the wire attached to it was the extension cord which is missing. It was Mrs. Gale's theory that the murderer let himself out of the window on the wire fastened to the ring, and that his weight pulled the ring loose. I felt sure that she was right as I waited there crouched against the wall with the automatic in my hand.

"It was not long until the ring fell over a picket, and I heard the man on the other side pulling himself up. Once I heard an almost repressed moan of pain. He must have been pretty well done up, I thought, if he had clawed his way through that thicket. And afterwards I saw that his ankle was sprained; he must have fallen when the ring gave way.

"When his hands grasped the iron pickets he clung to them and looked over the top of the wall. I could not see him, but I knew he was looking up and down the street. It was beginning to get light then. After a moment he drew himself up and stood on top of the wall. He climbed over the iron pickets. It was then I noticed his ankle was sprained and swollen. He was a slim, small fellow, hardly grown, I should say. He wore a cap pulled down over his eyes, khaki breeches and puttees and a brown sweater. He pulled the cord up and threw it over on the outside within a few feet of me. It was not till then that he looked directly down and saw me there pointing the automatic at him.

"For an instant we looked straight at each other. He had a dark, thin face; I could not distinguish more in that light. I was about to speak to him when suddenly he slipped the ring off the picket and, with the cord in one hand, leaped down upon me. He must have intended tying me up. But I fired, hitting him in the right arm. I tried to fire again, but the automatic jammed. Then he began stabbing me, using his left hand. It was a small, thin blade. He was in a perfect frenzy. If he could have used his right hand I probably would not be telling you about it now.

"I grappled with him, and we rolled across the walk. I thought I could hold him; he was not strong. I remember I was trying to grasp his left wrist and hold the knife away from me. And then I became faint with the pain. I must have let go. I suppose he thought he had done for me. I heard him running, still limping. It was all over in an instant. And that is all I remember till I came to in the house."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE officers agreed that it was a likely story, but they remained skeptical. Only the fact that no knife could be found and that Paul could not have hidden it in his condition prevented them from believing that he had attempted suicide, in remorse for the crime or through fear of discovery.

The automatic he had carried was examined and fired repeatedly by the officers. It was not jammed. And experts declared that there was no evidence of its ever having jammed.

On the other hand, it was plain that some one had recently torn a way through the tangle of wild rose vines, and shreds of brown wool were discovered on the briers. The thicket was cut away in search of more evidence to corroborate Paul's story, but nothing more could be found.

A thorough search was instituted for the man Paul had described. Ruth was happily confident that the party would be found.

With a fairly accurate description of his physical appearance it should not be hard to find a man so wounded and crippled.

For a time the police concentrated every effort on the search. But as the days went by and the questioning of all physicians and druggists failed to reveal that the man had sought medical aid and all trace of his flight was lost, the pursuit became practically hopeless.

The police and the public began to believe that they had been made the victims of a clever hoax. That Paul knew more of the matter than he had told was the consensus of general opinion. Logan and Dix, who had left Adam Gale and his younger half-brother only a few minutes before the murder, had told of the angry looks and words that had passed between the brothers that evening, and that Logan had at the time expressed a fear of serious trouble resulting.

Paul had admitted the quarrel, but had steadfastly refused to state what had been said, other than that it had concerned Ruth Gale. The police became more and more certain of their case against Paul.

Moto, too, was still unaccounted for. He had not been seen since his strange disappearance after viewing his master's body. Opinion differed as to whether he was a confederate of Paul or the slayer himself. Whatever his guilty knowledge, the sight of the victim had been too much for even his Oriental composure.

Ruth did not believe that Moto was concerned in the crime any more than was Paul. Knowing something of the Oriental mind, she concluded that he had probably had reasons of his own for disappearing.

She became too much alarmed over Paul's position to consider the Jap's motives. It was practically certain that he would be arrested for the murder of Adam as soon as he was able to leave the hospital. That he was being watched closely she knew, as well as he. He was strangely reticent, even to her.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RUTH began a desperate search for facts to refute the suspicions accumulating against Paul. She went daily from the hotel, where she had taken up her residence since the murder, to the old house on Figueroa street, and there she carefully and systematically went through all of Adam's papers and belongings which had not been taken in charge by the district attorney. She found much that was illuminating of his early life and of the beginnings of his fortune in the silver and copper mines of Chili and the Argentine. She found tax receipts, old checks and newspapers telling of the years he had spent in Valparaiso and San Juan. She examined every scrap of paper and kept notes of the information she gained. She learned more of Adam Gale than she had ever known as his wife. But as far as her present object was concerned the quest seemed hopeless. The police, too, seemed unable to learn anything more definite about those early years.

Whenever she mentioned Adam's past to Paul he veered away from the subject. And there were times when she caught him looking at her in a strange, pitying way. She became more and more certain that Adam's death had come as a result of those years of his life he had spent as a wanderer.

Then, strangely enough, one day, in going through Adam's wardrobe, having exhausted the recourses of his desk and files, she came across a letter with a Chilean postmark in the pocket of a suit. Adam had rarely kept a letter. None of a personal nature had been discovered among his papers. This one was addressed in a bold, feminine scrawl. Ruth seized it eagerly, tremblingly, and hurried to the light of the window. She opened it breathlessly. It was of fairly recent date and read:

"MISTER ADAM GALE: You did not think to hear from me—Dolores. But I have obtained your address. It was given to me by Padre Felipe of San Juan in the Argentine. You do not remember the Padre Felipe perhaps?

"You are a dog, Adam Gale! A beast! You took me from the convent school. You made me run away with you. I believed in you. I was but fifteen years. I was a child then. But I am a woman now. And I have suffered. You left me to return to my family, disgraced. You regarded me as of inferior race—I, who am of longer descent, prouder people and wealthier family than you! You called me Mexican, Indian, nigger! I have not forgotten your insults. And then you discarded me!

"I pray, Adam Gale, that you may suffer as you have made DOLORES."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RUTH hurried with the letter to St. Vincent's, anxious to tell Paul of this new development. He listened without surprise.

"I had hoped you would not learn of this," he said when he had read the letter.

"Why, Paul, what do you mean? Had you seen this letter before?"

"No, but I knew of Dolores. Adam once, in a moment of confidence, told me of her."

"You suspected her all the time?"

"Yes," he answered reluctantly.

"But why—why didn't you tell?"

"There were two reasons. One was you; the other—the other woman. I would not want to see a woman—any woman—tried for murder."

"But why me? The scandal of Adam's past would not hurt me as much as this uncertainty and the anxiety of having you suspected."

"But there was a marriage, Ruth." The words seemed dragged from him against his will. "Dolores was his wife."

"You mean then that I was not?" She faced the facts more calmly than he.

He nodded. "It amounts to that—in law."

"Oh, Paul, why did you not tell me before? If I was not his wife, then—then I would have been free to marry you!"

"I didn't know it myself until recently. I thought from something he said—some-

thing about never going back to South America—that there might have been a marriage. I wrote dozens of letters to find out. He took precious care to keep it a secret. But there was a marriage. I succeeded in locating the very priest who had married them, Padre Felipe. In that way I am indirectly responsible for her locating Adam—and killing him—if she did. She was Dolores Martinez. Her father was a wealthy cattle baron in Argentina. Adam persuaded her to run away with him—he had to marry her to do it, though. He lived with her in Valparaiso about a year. He treated her shamefully, and then deserted her.

"I had only just learned all this. It was that knowledge that I threatened Adam with that last night. I did not want it made public—on your account. I told him that if he would not allow you to get a divorce quietly I would tell you—everything. I would bring a charge of bigamy against him. He was furious. He said I couldn't prove it. He said she was dead."

"And all the time," Ruth broke in with a little tremor of horror, "the assassin—the man she had hired or persuaded to kill him—was right there in the house, maybe hiding in the very room."

"Ruth," Paul whispered, "did you ever think—it might——" Then he broke off: "No, no——"

"What were you going to say?"

"Nothing. It was nothing. I do not want to bias your judgment with mere suspicion," he explained. "Yes, the fellow might have slipped in when we were all standing on the steps." He went back to her conjecture. "Those Mexicans are stealthy as Indians sometimes."

"Yes, that is what I was thinking," she mused. "I suppose we ought to tell the police," she said slowly, "but I wish I could work out the solution myself."

"They'll have to know," Paul agreed. "It doesn't matter, now that you have found out. And the woman is probably safe—hiding somewhere in South America."

"I hope she is," Ruth declared. "But the man, the actual murderer, must not have been able to travel far. He must be here somewhere. Don't you see that we must find him—for your sake? I think I know one way, Paul. But you must promise me not to notify the police until to-morrow—until I have tried my way. I would like to find him myself."

"How could you, Ruth?"

"He must have had an automobile waiting; he could not have escaped without one. I have been thinking it all out, you see. He must have had some one to drive it. It might have been Dolores. I think she was waiting for him in the car in some nearby alley. They had planned to drive to the border and be in Mexico before morning. They would not risk taking a train here, I think."

"But how do you intend to trace them?"

"Through the car. It is possible that the car was rented. She was wealthy; they would not have stolen one. They might have bought it. But I think it more probable that it was rented. They would leave it somewhere and write back that it had broken down. The man might have been her brother—or her lover. At least, she must have brought him with her; she would not have trusted a stranger. When he was hurt I think they must have stopped somewhere in hiding until he could recover. They could not go on, even in Mexico, without being discovered, since he was crippled and wounded."

"That's clever, Ruth. I really believe you will find him."

"I am going to," Ruth declared determinedly. "I am going to to-day, if it can be done. They would have rented a car without a driver. And there are not many places where that can be done."

"But you must not go by yourself," Paul objected. "Let me send some one with you."

"No, this is my plan," she declined firmly. "If I took a man along he would get all the credit for it," she pointed out. "If I succeed I want the glory myself. Besides, this is the twentieth century; there are no bandits' strongholds in the California foothills."

"Then prmise me that you will at least let me know where your chase takes you."

"I'll phone you before I start," she agreed.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MAKING inquiries, Ruth discovered one company who had rented a car on the day in question to a woman who had abandoned it at the town of Rosita, sixty miles south. She had written, enclosing a bill and saying that the machine had broken down. They had sent for the car, but there had seemed to be nothing wrong with it. No, the incident was not considered unusual; women often had trouble with cars when there was no fault with the machine. It had been found on the Camino Real, a short distance north of Rosita. Yes, the woman was dark—of a Spanish type; she had taken the car at about five in the afternoon.

Ruth asked to see the letter. It was produced. The handwriting was the same as the Dolores letter, and it was signed D. Martinez. Ruth glanced at the postmark. It had been posted from Rosita, but the time was three o'clock in the afternoon of the day before the murder! She had mailed the letter before she had even rented the car, confident that it would not be delivered until the following day. Her plans must have been complete. Then they had not intended driving to the border—unless they had arranged for another machine in Rosita. Ruth thought it improbable, as it would only double the chances of detection. They must have intended hiding at Rosita from the first. There was nothing more to be learned about the machine. She phoned Paul that she was going to Rosita.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

RUTH guided her blue roadster along the polished, darkly shining concrete surface of the Camino Real, over the trail that the Franciscan fathers had followed with bare feet from mission to mission. She passed the picturesque ruins of San Juan Capistrano, once the most beautiful of them all. A few miles farther she came to the place where the car had been left the morning of the murder. It was perhaps half a mile from the town of Rosita.

Ruth stopped her machine at the side of the road on the spot where the other car had been found. It had been so many days since then, and so many machines had passed over that road, that it seemed that every trace of the other car must be lost. There was nothing to be seen but the flourishing, peaceful orchards that bordered the road. A cross-road led off to the left towards the foothills. It was an unpaved, little-used road. Ruth turned her car into it, wondering where it led.

She reflected that if the wounded man were in the neighborhood a physician from Rosita had probably been summoned. She ought to go on to the village and make inquiries.

Then, turning a curve, the road branched. A number of signs confronted her. One of them read Rancho del Monte. Ruth stopped uncertainly. The road to the Rancho del Monte led directly into the hills; the other branch turned south again. While she waited a boy with a team passed. She asked him about the Rancho del Monte.

It was one of the few old Spanish ranches still remaining. The ranch house had been built a century ago. But at present it was owned and occupied by a family of the disappointingly unromantic, un-Spanish name of Baxter. The name almost convinced Ruth that she was following the wrong trail. There was nothing suggestive of Latin jealousy and vengeance in the name of Baxter. The house was five miles distant by the road, but only half a mile by a bridle trail over the hill. The boy pointed out the trail—hardly more than a path, which soon lost itself in the woods. The house might be seen from the top of the hill—only a short climb. But she'd better be careful, the boy warned her; it was steep. Only the other day a young lady from the Rancho had fallen and hurt herself there, and was likely to die.

Ruth decided to climb the trail for a view

of the house. It would be better than stopping her car in the road to watch a house whose inmates she had no real reason for suspecting. But the trail proved longer and steeper than it had looked. It threaded a forest of young sycamores, interspersed occasionally by a twisted old veteran, whose limbs were bent nearly to the ground in the picturesquely distorted manner of these trees. Once as she turned for another view of one of the gnarled old giants, it seemed as if she saw some one crouching behind it. But it was only a flash of a movement. She tried to throw off the feeling that she was being followed; but nevertheless it persisted. There was an uncanny sensation of being watched. The cracking of a twig, the rustling of leaves startled her. She turned suddenly several times, but saw nothing. She proceeded on her way, half afraid to turn back and ashamed to give up.

She hurried on, but stopped suddenly at the sight of one of the low-hanging limbs of a sycamore at the edge of the trail. She had almost brushed against it. Its satiny, silver bark was splotched with a dark stain, like blood. She stood staring at it for a second—frightened. Then she laughed at her own nervousness and was about to go on—it was only where some boy had shot a squirrel, perhaps—when she saw that the dead leaves and the earth under the tree had been disturbed, as if a struggle had taken place. A few feet above her head the trail, turning back on itself, formed a narrow ledge on the hillside. She wondered if the girl the boy had spoken of had fallen here. It seemed probable.

She stirred the dead leaves with her foot contemplatively. The ground had been broken and scratched and then patted down. She turned the loose earth over with the toe of her slipper. Something dark green showed under a clod. She seized it and pulled it up. It was an electric cord, and on the end of it, tied fast to it, was the ring from the chest of drawers in Adam's room!

She almost cried out at her unexpected discovery. How had it come to be buried there? Then, starting nervously at a slight sound, she saw a man—a Jap—standing in the trail, leaning forward, watching her, and only a few feet behind and below. At first she thought it was Moto.

"Moto!" she cried.

But he had disappeared, dropped to the earth, before she had even opened her lips. Her exclamation fell on empty silence. She turned and ran wildly up the trail.

Scrambling up the steep places, stumbling, hurrying breathlessly, she came out at last from the wooded hillside to the open spaces on top of the ridge. She stopped for a second to recover her breath. Below her stretched a cultivated valley, green, rolling fields, and only a few hundred yards distant, the old Spanish hacienda—picturesque, sprawling, its creamy, stuccoed walls and red-tiled roofs gleaming in the sun, and in cool, dark contrast, the shadows of its long verandas.

She walked toward it slowly, wondering. Was it Moto she had seen in the woods? Why had he followed her? Why had any one followed her? No one had known of her quest—except Paul. A thousand questions perplexed her brain. Where had Moto been since the night of the murder? She had not considered him with suspicion before. Had she been wrong? And what had become of Adam's watch? Did it contain some secret, or had it been taken because of sentiment? Did Paul know more than he had told even her? What had he started to tell her that morning when he had suddenly checked himself? Why had he said the automatic had jammed when it had not? Was it only for her sake that he had kept the story of Dolores from the police and the public? And, above all, how had the ring come to be buried there? And what was its connection with the blood stain on the tree? Had the murderer stopped there on his way to the ranch house?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SHE tried to think of some excuse or reason for calling at the Rancho del Monte. What explanation could she offer if they were honest people who greeted her

hospitably? What defence if they were not? She should have provided herself with some plausible object before coming. But now, since she had found the ring, she must go on. She would ask boldly for Dolores Martinez.

She straightened her hat and her hair and advanced bravely up the eucalyptus-shaded avenue to the house. The door was wide open, and the interior dark and shady. She knocked lightly.

A stout, elderly, motherly woman came around the corner of the piazza. Ruth's strained nerves relaxed and she gave a sigh of relief. The comfortable-looking woman with the dark eyes and white hair was probably Mrs. Baxter. She felt rather foolish asking for Dolores Martinez, but she could think of nothing else now.

"Is—is Dolores Martinez here?" she stammered.

The woman's black eyes brimmed with tears as she bowed her head slowly. Ruth was not prepared to face emotion. Did the woman realize why she had come?

"I—I came to see her." It was all she could think to say.

The old lady came up to her; she put one arm around her and drew her around the corner of the veranda.

"I'm afraid it is—too late. She can't see any one—now," she answered chokingly. "Who—are you—dear?"

"I am—an old friend of hers. I knew her—in Argentina," Ruth ventured. "But I don't understand—why——"

"The priest has already given the last sacrament," she whispered brokenly.

"Oh, I am sorry!" Ruth exclaimed involuntarily, moved by the older woman's grief. "I didn't know. Are you Mrs. Baxter?"

She asked the question naturally, but her brain was whirling. She felt she was on the verge of uncovering the mystery. If the older woman did not suspect her purpose, if she was not being cunningly deceived, she could learn everything about Dolores Martinez. The old lady was Mrs. Baxter.

"Oh, the shock will kill her poor father," she moaned. "This is the first time she has ever been allowed to visit me—my only niece."

"How did it happen?" Ruth inquired softly.

"She was out walking; she was fond of roaming these hills; she was fond of this old ranch; it has belonged to the Martinezes for over a hundred years. Her father was my only brother. He went to South America when he was a boy, and I married Jim Baxter," the old woman rambled on, relieved to have a sympathetic listener. But Ruth was anxious to hear more of Dolores.

"But Dolores?" she asked encouragingly.

"She fell—on the trail over the hill. Perhaps you came that way?" Mrs. Baxter inquired.

Ruth nodded assent.

"Then you must have seen the place—where the trail overhangs. She fell there. She sprained her ankle, and the pistol she carried went off accidently and shot her in one arm."

Ruth gave an audible gasp, but the old lady only took it for an expression of pain and sympathy.

"We didn't find her until morning," she went on. "We searched all night. The men went over that very trail several times, but she had crawled away and lost herself trying to get back to the house. Her ankle had swollen terribly, and she had fainted with the pain and loss of blood. The exposure and suffering had weakened her. She was in delirium several days. Blood poisoning set in, and now, they say, there is —no hope." The old lady sobbed quietly.

Ruth wondered about the pistol. Had Dolores really carried one? But there was no doubt about Mrs. Baxter's belief in her story. And there was no doubt that her grief was genuine. Ruth rose to go.

"I must not intrude any longer," she apologized.

"I'll let you know—how—she is—if you'll give me your address," Mrs. Baxter offered.

"Ruth—Roberts," Ruth responded hesitatingly, and gave the address of a friend. "Please let me know," she concluded.

She was dreading the walk back over the

hill, and had almost decided to tramp the full five miles by the road rather than risk it. But it was getting late and would be dark before she could reach her machine if she took the longer route. That the old lady had no suspicion of the real motive of her visit was plain, but the man who had followed her must have known. He might be a confederate or servant of Dolores, who knew or suspected her connection with the crime. She told herself it could not have been Moto. It would have been too horrible, if he had assisted his master's slayer! She was wondering if she might ask Mrs. Baxter for some one to accompany her over the hill. She had told her how she had come. That she should be afraid to return alone would not be unnatural.

While she was considering how best to ask the favor, her problem was solved for her.

A young priest came out of the doorway.

"She is in peace. I—I think I have comforted her," he said to Mrs. Baxter. Then he turned his sharp young eyes on Ruth. Mrs. Baxter introduced them.

"Miss Roberts has left her car at the foot of the hill, Father Burke," she said.

"I shall be glad to accompany you down the trail," he offered, still gazing at her so keenly that Ruth was half afraid to accept his offer. But his young face was so honest she felt that he could not be other than he seemed and resolutely put aside her suspicion.

"I confess I was nervous about returning alone," she admitted, "and I shall be glad to have company."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FATHER BURKE said little to her at first. He seemed still to be summing her up with an occasional, curious, sidelong glance. She asked him a few questions politely. He had walked from Rosita to see the Senorita Martinez. He had come every day recently. He was afraid there was no hope. And then as they started down the trail he spoke to her quietly.

"You, I think, are Mrs. Gale," he said.

Ruth turned suddenly, prepared for flight.

"Do not be afraid," he said, smiling reassuringly at her fear. "I should not have startled you that way. I am not a villain in disguise. I am only a priest and confessor," he added soberly.

"Is that how you knew? Did she—confess?"

"She has confessed," he replied slowly, "and she has requested me to make the truth known—when she has gone."

"But how did you recognize me?" Ruth asked, still puzzled.

"I have read the papers and seen your pictures. But how did you solve the mystery for yourself?"

Ruth told him. She drew the coil of wire and ring from her pocket and showed him.

"I hope you will not make your discovery public—for a day or two," he requested gravely. "It will not be for long—a day or two—at the most. She has endured much—her life has been sad. I hope her death may be peaceful. Her people do not suspect. Her aunt does not know even that she has been married. The nurse and doctor are old family friends. They have never doubted her story. You and I are the only ones who know, and, as her confessor, my knowledge is sacred—until—the time comes—when she wishes it made public."

"I would keep her secret always," Ruth declared, "if it were not for Paul. He must be cleared of the unjust suspicion."

"It is her wish that he should," the priest answered. "I took down her confession for her, as she dictated, and she signed it. She has no desire to live. If she had she might have pulled through; but as it is, the wound and physical and mental suffering and the exposure and infection, all have been too much for her. There is no chance now. How she drove a car sixty miles, wounded as she was, is a miracle of endurance."

"Did she take his watch for a remembrance?" Ruth asked suddenly. The priest seemed surprised.

"She did not mention the watch," he answered.

"Tell me how she managed it all, if you can now," Ruth asked.

"There is little that you do not know," he replied. "But I think I might try to make you understand her motives without violating the confessional. She would want you to understand," he went on thoughtfully. "Her race nurses its vengeance, as you know. Her whole life, since Adam Gale deserted her, has centred in a passionate desire for retaliation. 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'

"When she finally succeeded in locating him she came here for the purpose of winning him back—or killing him. She slipped into the house by the front door, while Adam Gale was standing on the steps talking to his guests. She was hiding in the closet under the stairs when Paul Gale returned with his brother. She heard them quarreling, but did not hear their words. When the younger man had gone she went into the study where Adam Gale was. She charged him with unfaithfulness and begged him to come back to her. She said she gave him that chance for life. But he was furious with her, and cursed her, and laughed at her. And she killed him—in a frenzy of hate. She went upstairs, intending to kill you, too."

Ruth shuddered, remembering the unpleasant sensation of watching the knob turn in the door.

"She has suffered remorse for her fury against you and for her attack on Paul Gale, but for the killing of the man who deserted her she feels no regret. When the younger Gale fired at her she screamed and leaped on him like a tigress. At the sound of her voice he dropped the pistol and tried to seize her. 'Are you a woman,' he cried. And in the fear of discovery and capture she stabbed him. She tried to kill him."

"So that is why he said the automatic jammed," Ruth exclaimed. "And that was what he almost told me this morning. He started to ask me if I had thought that it might be the woman herself. Then he broke off. He must not have been sure."

"He could not have been certain, I think, or he would have told all," the priest assured her. "She might easily have passed for a youth in the clothes she wore."

"But how did she explain the pistol wound," Ruth asked. "Mrs. Baxter said she carried an automatic."

"She carried both, but true to the traditions of her race, she used the knife."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THEY came to the road. Ruth's car was waiting. But it had been turned around! A figure rose from the running board on the opposite side, and Moto stood before them, grinning. And he was busily engaged in winding Adam's watch, with a child-like pleasure in its mechanism!

"Moto! How did you come here?" Ruth cried.

"Mister Paul send me to follow you; see that you are safe," he explained.

"But where did you get Adam's watch?" she demanded sternly. "Don't you know that the police have been searching for it?"

"I no read the newspapers," he replied with a shrug. "Mister Adam gave the watch to me to get him fixed—day before he died. He all right now," he added calmly.

"But where have you been, Moto? Why did you run away—that night?"

"I go to San Francisco," he replied with Oriental impassivity. "Police return me last night—free trip—release me this morning." Moto smiled serenely at the thought that his return passage had cost him nothing.

"But why did you go?" Ruth persisted.

"I go to the home of my people to pray to my ancestors for the soul of my departed master." He bowed low, and then with a propitiatory glance at Father Burke: "I also pray to Christian God," he added, crossing himself.

(*The End.*)

COMING

A Splendid Two-Part Detective Serial

"TRACKED BY INCHES"

By Edward Lee Bennett

Begins In Our Next Number

"A Case of Revenge"

by Lester LeGrange

"SKYLIGHT HARPY," second-story man, stopped before the Van Dorf Building, drank deep of the air and sunshine of freedom of which he had been for once unjustly deprived.

Drawing a card from his pocket, he read it, then entering the building consulted the directory. The office he sought being but one flight up, he did not wait for the elevator, but took to the stairs, leaping up three steps at a time.

Glancing around, he turned to the left, and stopped before the door and knocked; hardly awaiting the invitation to "Come in," he opened the door.

"Detective Wayne here?" he demanded.

The single occupant of the room, a man in shirtsleeves seated before a desk by the window, glanced up with a smile.

"Sure. Come in, Harpy." Then, accepting the extended hand: "Close call for you, eh? But—well, no harm done."

Wayne could not doubt the sincerity in the handclasp of the other.

"Wayne," the voice quivered, "you're a new 'bull' around here, but I—I—oh, the deuce. I can't say it. You know how I feel about it, don't you?"

Wayne nodded.

"I can imagine. Sit down, Harpy."

But the other had already dropped weakly in a chair and was mopping his perspiring face.

"Gee!" His teeth chattered, and he was shivering as from a chill. "Gee!" he repeated, "I'm getting it now; it's just comin' to me—what I missed!"

Wayne opened a drawer in the desk and produced a flask.

"Help yourself; never mind a glass; go to it," and the trembling wretch drank deep.

"Take it from me, Bo, I'm done! If any of youse guys ever pinch me again it'll be a 'frame-up.' You ain't gonna get anything on me again, not on the level. I'm jumping a 'rattler' out of here to-night, and I'm gonna hit the 'straight and narrer' from now on!"

"Your last term scared you out, did it?" laughed Wayne.

"I ain't afraid to admit it. Say! How do you think it feels to sit in that death-house waitin' fer 'em to come and git yuh to shoot the juice into yuh? Gee! I'll say I'm scared out!"

His voice changed, and there was suspicion as well as curiosity in it when he asked: "What made *you* do it? What made you butt in for? Wasn't anything

to you; like I said, you're new 'round here."

Wayne stared from the window a moment before answering.

"Some day, long before you and I have crossed over to the other side, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren are going to look back on us just as we look at—well, what we call barbarians to-day. One man kills another and it's murder. Another man kills him and that's different! That's legal! But I can't help thinking that, in the eyes of the Great Judge who put us here, one is just as guilty as the other.

"I'm against capital punishment, even for those proven guilty beyond a doubt. As to the others—well, your case is an example. When they pinched you I knew you didn't do it."

"You knew it before—before the trial?"

Wayne nodded.

"Then why in thunder didn't you come and say so? Ugh! Don't you know how a man feels settin' there while they 'frame' him for the chair, knowing he didn't do?"

"They didn't 'frame' you, Harpy; circumstantial evidence, that's all." Wayne shrugged his shoulders. "Lucky for you that the boss got the wrong dope on you and had me on your heels the night it happened. You see," Wayne smiled, "we had you all set for Atlanta—that 'Wright case' we just closed up—but of course you don't know anything about that. Anyway, the night of the double murder I was right after you from six until after midnight, when you turned in for the night at your room down on Hogan street. The murder took place between 7.30 and 9 p. m."

"Heavens, man! And I couldn't prove an alibi! Why didn't you come out then and say so?" Harry reproached.

"Several reasons. First, the boss brought me in from Denver for that 'Wright case' because the gang knew all of the local men, and I'd have had to have made myself known, too.

"Then, aside from saving you a bit of worry, you were in no danger, for I had the whole affair in hand in a day or two; at least I knew the real criminal, but I needed the facts, and we had to send Bronson up from New Orleans to Shreveport to get them."

Harpy's curiosity was aroused.

"You knew in a day or two who did it? Go on; spill it."

Wayne frowned a moment in contemplation, absently selecting two cigars from a box on the desk, passing one to Harpy, lighted his own and watched the fire take hold before proceeding.

The case was as follows:

Some weeks before the night clerk of the Holland Hotel, together with the house detective, had entered the rooms occupied by two men who had registered as Bob Claypool and Jim Brannigan of Shreveport, La.

They found the rooms littered from the ransacking they had evidently received and the two men murdered, stabbed with a stiletto.

They immediately notified the police, whose investigation disclosed that the two men had arrived about two weeks before, seemed to have plenty of money and made a vulgar display of it.

Shortly after their arrival they were joined by a young chap, Tommy Holdman, whom, the evidence showed, they had met before.

He was described as slender and graceful, almost feminine, of the "sporty" class.

He knew the ropes, and so, early the second week, he introduced them to three girls from the Gayety, playing in the city at the time, and they had a fast and furious week.

Holdman was leaving Sunday evening for Chicago, while the girls were to leave Sunday afternoon for Cleveland, so on Saturday night they held the final blowout.

Holdman and the girls only drank moderately. Claypool and Brannigan, going the limit, "soaked up the booze like sponges," as Holdman said later.

About six in the morning the booze gave out and the party broke up, both Claypool and Brannigan sprawled on the floor, helpless, paralyzed.

The men occupied a suite of rooms, with a bath between their bedrooms.

When questioned later the three girls tes-

tified that Holdman, although small and delicate, had, unaided, put the two men to bed, after which they, Holdman and the girls, left the hotel.

The clerk on duty spoke to them as they left.

About seven o'clock that evening, Sunday, Holdman came in, and with a grin asked if Claypool and Brannigan were in.

The clerk, finding neither key in their mail boxes, smiled back, and asked the operator to ring their rooms, but although she tried many times she could get no response.

"Lord, how those boys did lap up the booze," Holdman laughed; "still, they should be over it now."

His face grew sober.

"Say, you don't suppose—well, never know what kind of stuff you get to drink these days; just last week a fellow down in Memphis 'kicked in' from the 'white mule.' Wonder if we'd better go up and see if they're all right."

But he laughed again.

"Oh, shucks! Of course not. They're just sleeping off the jag, and some jag it was, too!"

Then followed a little more talk, another effort to rouse the men over the phone, and Holdman left, saying he'd be back again before his train left.

Holdman's suspicion of the nature of the booze they may have had kept recurring to the clerk until, unable to overcome the desire to investigate, he called the house detective, and together they went up to the apartments occupied by the men.

The rooms were rank with the odor of stale tobacco smoke mixed with the foul whisky breaths of the sleeping men, for the windows, which opened onto fire-escapes, had been kept closed by the occupants.

The clerk fought his way over to the window in Claypool's room, which he threw wide open, while the detective examined the form on the bed.

Claypool was in a drunken stupor, but with wet towels after much effort, and raised to a sitting position, he opened his eyes, groaned, calling for water, but when the clerk had returned from the bath-room with a pitcher he had lapsed into unconsciousness again.

The detective in disgust turned away.

"Let 'em sleep it off," he growled, but passed through to Brannigan's room, satisfying himself that he was all right, after which they both returned to the office.

At 8.30 Holdman returned, and the clerk told him of the condition of the two men.

Holdman was disappointed.

"I wanted to see them before I left, and I leave at 9; just got thirty minutes to make my train. Ring them once for luck." But this brought no results.

"Well, I'll leave them a letter." And asking the clerk to call a taxi, procuring stationary, he wrote a letter, addressing it to Claypool, requesting that it be placed in his box; the taxi arrived and he departed.

Of course the letter was opened by the police. Holdman had written jokingly about their jag, told them to be sure to make "Chi" in three weeks, as the girls would be there, and to ring him at the usual place as soon as they arrived; sorry he had to leave without seeing them again, etc.

He was traced as far as Chicago, but as there was no evidence against him no special effort was made to locate him.

Monday evening, when the night clerk came back on duty, seeing the undelivered letter in Claypool's letter box, he had the operator ring their rooms, and receiving no response he again called the house detective; they entered the apartment, this time finding the men murdered, as related before.

Wayne reclined in the swivel chair, hands behind his head.

"As simple as the case was to me, we can't blame the police for their error. Remember, I *knew* you were innocent; therefore the police *must* be wrong.

"The victims had foolishly flashed their 'roll,' and when the police took charge, finding everything of value gone, they accepted the theory of robbery, glanced over their list of available suspects, grabbed some poor devil who couldn't prove an alibi——"

"Meaning me." Harpy winced.

"Yes; and the convincing evidence, the finding of their jewelry in your room——"

Harpy jumped up.

"Honest t' God, Wayne, I don't know how it got there."

"I know you don't, but it convicted you, and you went to the death-house."

Harpy shuddered.

"I read the case here in the office," Wayne continued, "and while I admit that knowing you could not have done it may have helped me, yet—robbery? Hell!" He spat in disgust.

"Look at the facts! These two men occupied separate beds and with a bath between, yet each was found murdered in his own bed, with the bed-clothing hardly disturbed, except that it had been pulled down around the legs, undoubtedly by the victims in their short death struggles.

"Had it been robbery and the burglar detected, it's not likely that they would have been murdered in bed, and with no evidence of a struggle; at least not both of them, and in separate rooms!

"A knife was the weapon. Who ever heard of a burglar using a knife for protection!

"Again, had an intruder been discovered and they attacked him in one of the rooms, blood stains would be in evidence aside from those on the beds.

"The coroner established the fact that the murder had been committed within an hour following the visit of the clerk and house man to the rooms on Sunday night.

"This short interval would not have given sufficient time for either of the men to have recovered from their drunken sleep to such an extent that an intruder, if bent upon robbery, would have disturbed them, for a burglar doesn't advertise his presence!

"There are four common causes, with their variations, which lead to murder.

"First: Detection while committing a crime. We eliminated that.

"Second: Self-defense. There was no occasion for that.

"Third: Sudden and uncontrollable anger, and as there was nothing to cause that, it leaves only the fourth cause—revenge!

"Since the motive *was* revenge and *both* men were victims, it made the investigation very simple, since it was only necessary to trace the joint actions of the two men back to some deed participated in by both that would give cause for the present criminal to seek revenge. This was quickly done and the motive found.

Wayne stopped for a moment to moisten a loose wrapper on his cigar before relighting it.

"When I read the details in the paper, before I even interviewed the clerk, the facts were as clear as though they were printed before me, and that afternoon I could have placed my hands on the woman——"

"Woman!" exclaimed Harpy.

"Why, certainly," Wayne replied impatiently, "and insane."

Harpy dropped back in his chair.

"Go on; I give up."

"Suppose you or any normal man was to seek revenge. When you had your victim at your mercy, wouldn't you want him to know you—to know who was taking his life and why?

"This was not the case here. Both men met death unconscious of the cause or person, which pointed both to a disordered mind; that is, one completely unbalanced, since I believe that all murders, especially for vengeance, are committed by one suffering from temporary insanity at least, and to a woman, since an insane man would differ from an ordinarily sane man in the accomplishment of his vengeance only in rage and violence at the moment of fulfiling that vengeance, most likely mutilating his victim in some horrible manner, while a woman, driven desperate or insane by some deed, would only seek the swift death of the perpetrator of the deed.

"Of course there are exceptions; there is always the chance of error.

"But, all things considered, the care with which she covered her tracks, the prearranged alibi, I was confident, although she left the city immediately, that she would return as soon as possible.

"And having accomplished that purpose which she had most likely planned for

months, even years, the diseased mind, which had been guided with insane cunning, would now give way, relax we might say, and her insanity would at once become apparent to those with whom she came in contact."

Wayne reached for a file on the desk and drew forth a clipping.

"Note the date," he remarked as it was taken by the other, "the morning of the day they grabbed you."

It was brief, stating that a waitress in a restaurant on lower Third avenue had suddenly became violently insane, etc.

The rooming house where she resided was located, and her room searched for the address of friends or relatives, nothing being found which would identify them or her, but over a thousand dollars in cash was found; it was a mystery, etc.

Harpy extended the clipping, then suddenly drew it back, re-reading part of it.

"Why, this dame lived at the same place I had my hangout. See—360 Hogan street! Why, sure! I knowed her! She'd been there about two weeks, and she went nuts! And she's the jane that croaked those two guys in the Holland?"

Wayne nodded.

"Yes, and she's the one who 'planted' the jewelry in your room, too. Knew they could identify the jewelry and wanted to get rid of it. Kept the money, intending to make her get-away when it was safe to leave."

Harpy again accused:

"And you, knowing this all the time, let me lay in the death-house and suffer hell?"

Wayne nodded. "Didn't hurt you any," he laughed; "in fact, it was a good thing for you. Didn't you say you were 'going straight?' "

"Yes, and I mean it, too. But go on; tell the rest of it."

"That's all that concerns you. However, if you're interested further——" He opened a drawer, and securing a sheaf of letters, telegrams, handed them to Harpy.

"These will give you the story."

Two of the meek started out to battle with the world; two wandering minstrels they became, vagabonds seeking fame and glory.

She was one of a team known in vaudeville parlance as a "sister act," she doing the "boy" parts.

He was a musician, a violinist.

They met; it was a true romance, and penniless though they both were, they joined hands and hearts to fight the world together.

Their struggles were useless against the great currents of life, and they were tossed about like two corks on a stormy sea.

Neither was fitted to conquer, both were weak, save in their devotion to each other, and hunger, starvation, only bound them closer together.

He was a pale, delicate creature, hardly more than a boy, while she was timid and cringing, living in terror of each to-morrow and the failure it would bring; but she was strong in her ability to conceal her fears from the boy, surrounding him with her love and confidence, inspiring him with the courage, which he quickly lost when he faced those who had the power to make or break them.

For two years they suffered defeat together before she, shy but happy, told him of the little stranger to arrive in the fall.

But this happiness was almost immediately hidden behind the black clouds creeping above their horizon; his frail, puny body had been unable to weather the privations of the cold, bitter winter just behind them, and as spring dawned his health failed and tuberculosis had him in its clutches.

With faces turned toward Arizona, drifting here and there, they worked their way toward the southwest, playing and singing sometimes in theatres, sometimes in hotels, more often in the streets, and while he suffered mentally as well as physically, she, too, suffered humiliations, humbled herself, stood the insults and insinuations of debased curs who considered themselves men, and with the right to hurl their vile jests at her—a street singer and beggar!—all of which she accepted with a smile, because the sacrifice was for her boy.

Through Virginia, into the Carolinas,

across Alabama and Mississippi they made their way and entered Louisiana.

They stopped overnight in a small town in the north-central part of the State, stopped because their money gave out and they could go no farther.

Refused work in the local moving picture theatre, they were forced into the street by necessity, and in front of the hotel they played and sang that evening, the girl collecting the nickels and dimes tossed to them.

There is a certain something about us all, a positive or negative personality that attracts or repels. Wealth or position may not influence, but the strong may be attracted to the weak and establish a protectorate over them.

Or again, with no cause whatever, beyond this negative force they may feel a hatred for them, and despite their superior strength will harass them, embarrass, even torture them upon every occasion. It is so all through life, starting with the early schooldays when the little weakling is protected by some of his schoolmates from others who openly show their contempt for him and make his life miserable.

The girl and the boy were about through for the night, the crowd having dwindled to a few idlers, when Claypool and Brannigan came upon them and insisted that they be entertained.

After a few songs the girl approached them, tambourine extended and smiling.

Brannigan, with a leer, made an insulting, indecent proposal and attempted to embrace the girl.

With a cry she ran to the boy, who stepped in front of her, but whose only defense was a verbal one, scathing, however, and vitriolic, which Claypool took upon himself to answer.

As he gazed at the delicate features of the boy an intense hatred for him came over the man.

With a sweep of his arm he hurled the boy off his feet and into the gutter, cursing him viciously.

What might have followed was prevented by the arrival of the marshal, who, a friend of the drunken pair, ordered the boy and girl off the street.

Claypool followed them to the door of the hotel, cursing and threatening as they disappeared within, and for an hour afterward they heard him in the street below swearing vengeance.

The next morning, as they waited on the station platform for the approaching mixed freight and passenger train that was to carry them farther into the southwest, a tiny pup, hardly able to walk yet, made its appearance around the corner of the station, while at the same moment a man leaped upon the platform and approached.

The puppy managed to get in the path of the man and became entangled in his feet.

He looked down, cursed and, drawing back a heavy boot, sent the tiny animal whirling through the air to fall at the feet of the girl. The man was Brannigan!

With a horrified cry of anger she denounced the man as he leaped upon the steps of the single coach of the train now standing before the station.

He glanced at the girl and recognized her; his lips curled, but, making no reply, he passed inside the coach.

Dogs she knew were not permitted in the coaches; she could not leave it, yet they must get aboard!

A breeze blew an old newspaper across her feet. Seizing it, she quickly wrapped it about the little animal, and not knowing whether it was dead or still alive, she carried it into the coach, passing to the rear seat, where they would be least observed, although the coach was nearly empty; an elderly lady with a boy of about twelve years sat near the front, Brannigan about midway back, and themselves comprising the passengers.

For some moments the train remained at the station, it being a division point where the train crews were changed, but as it pulled out they gave the animal what aid they could, at the same time watching for the appearance of the conductor from the front.

It was the brakeman coming from the rear, however, that discovered the animal, passing on, however, to inform the conductor, now entering the coach. The conductor was Claypool!

He stopped to talk to Brannigan, and, as they expected, the girl and boy were soon the subject of conversation, the conductor frowning back at them, while Brannigan several times snarled something they could not hear.

As Claypool turned toward them to collect their tickets she trembled as she covered the paper over the dog, for she saw that, although he was on duty, Claypool had been drinking again and was in an ugly mood.

He took the tickets from the girl, then suddenly lurched forward, threw the paper aside and grasped the almost lifeless animal by the neck, snarling:

"Dogs don't belong in hyer!"

The girl jumped to her feet and snatched the dog from him, then, apologetic, begged:

"I know that, Mister Conductor, but, please, you don't understand."

"I don't have to understand nothin'; gimme th' dog."

She shoved him away.

Brutally he grasped her arm. She slapped him and broke from his grasp.

Again he caught her; she clawed his hand with her nails, forcing him to release her, then struck him again, twice, across the face!

The old lady near the front trembled and buried herself in her seat, but the boy, childlike, jumped into the aisle, anticipating excitement.

Brannigan now joined the conductor.

"Y' all need any he'p?" he asked eagerly.

The girl turned upon him.

"You brute! You cur! You're responsible for this! If I was a man I'd——"

"Thur's a man beside yuh," he sneered.

Claypool was insane with rage.

"Yeah! Let him get up! You're a woman; I can't hit you, but I'll plug him full o' holes if he moves."

Brannigan drew a gun from his pocket.

"Use this," he offered, but Claypool now had his own gun in his hand.

The boy started to rise from his seat.

"Southern hospitality! Southern gentlemen!" he sneered.

The girl forced him back into his seat, but the insult had struck home!

Whether brute or born gentleman, nothing arouses the Southerner more than a reflection on the South by a Northerner.

Again the boy fought to get to his feet, this time succeeding.

He tried to force his way past the girl into the aisle.

There was a curse from Claypool; his gun flashed once! Twice! He emptied its contents into the body of the boy!

The boy fell between the seats.

The girl jumped to her feet. She gazed in bewildered surprise, amazement, at the conductor, then at the boy.

"Why—why — you — shot him — you've shot him!" It was astonishing! It was impossible! It couldn't be!

She gazed at the huddled form now wedged between the seats.

"Do you hear? You shot him! See? Look!" She pointed, the ghost of a hysterical smile playing about her trembling lips, while the eyes were just turning glassy, concealing the gathering horror in their depths which her paralyzed brain could not yet feel.

She turned to the boy again.

"Hal! Hal! He shot you, boy; he—he shot you!"

She shook the limp form, but the body crumpled and fell between the seats to the floor of the car.

"Hal!" she shrieked, the terror now in her voice and full realization of the brutal deed written on her face.

She whirled upon the now trembling Claypool.

"You!" Her voice was a whisper. "You murdered him!"

With no definite purpose she struggled from between the seats to rush at him, but Brannigan grasped her and threw her back over the seat.

Stunned, paralyzed, she gazed up helpless and hopeless; her eyes again turned glassy, her head fell back, and she knew no more.

Brannigan again drew his gun from his pocket, took a position before the seat facing the still motionless Claypool, raised his gun, fired a single shot into the wood-

work between the windows opposite, tossed the gun at the feet of the boy, then glanced at Claypool with a grin.

"There's yer case—self-defense!"

Of course there was a trial, but it was mockery!

Justice for friendless, destitute vagabonds? Never!

The old lady's testimony was shattered by the cross-examination, while the boy, a minor, a mere child, was not even put on the stand.

The conductor is an officer of the law when aboard his train.

Claypool pleaded self-defense, and he had his own witness, while there was no one to appear for the murdered boy, for they had sent the girl to a hospital—insane!

A few months later, in the state hospital, the child was born.

For a while she was rational, her mind held steady by anticipation of happiness through her baby, and which she called for constantly until, when she was able to be about, they were forced to show her the tiny grave.

Her mind again collapsed, she became a raving maniac possessed with but one desire—to kill those who had robbed her!

Twice she escaped and was recaptured.

The third time she was not found.

Silently Harpy returned the papers.

"All clear now?" asked Wayne.

Harpy was lost in thought for a moment, trying to grasp the exact point of connection.

"Ye—yes," he hesitated, "still——"

Wayne answered the unspoken question.

"We know that she came here, found work in a restaurant, both because even in her insanity she knew that she must work to live and also, not knowing of the relapse that must follow once her purpose was accomplished, she was establishing an alibi! This was obvious from the start.

"Another point: She got the men so full of booze that she knew it would take hours for the effect to pass off.

"Her trip to Chicago, returning immediately to work in the Third avenue restaurant—all planned cunningly in the insane brain.

"But the most marvelous thing to me was the insane psychology that caused her to plant fear of poisoning in the clerk's mind by her suggestion of the kind of booze being peddled now, causing him to go up to their rooms to investigate, finding them all right *at the same time,* except dead-drunk! Perhaps she had even reasoned that they would open the window for her, as they did for ventilation!

"Anyway, she was waiting for them; she saw them in the room, saw them partially arouse Claypool, knew from his condition that it was safe for her to enter; she saw them turn out the lights and leave the room.

"She entered the rooms from the fire-escape, and was probably inside before the clerk had reached the office. Then when she returned she wrote the letter, had the clerk call a taxi—all clever enough."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Harpy. "Who are you talking about, the girl or young Holdman?"

Wayne looked at Harpy in annoyed surprise.

"Haven't you got it yet? Why, Holdman was the girl!"

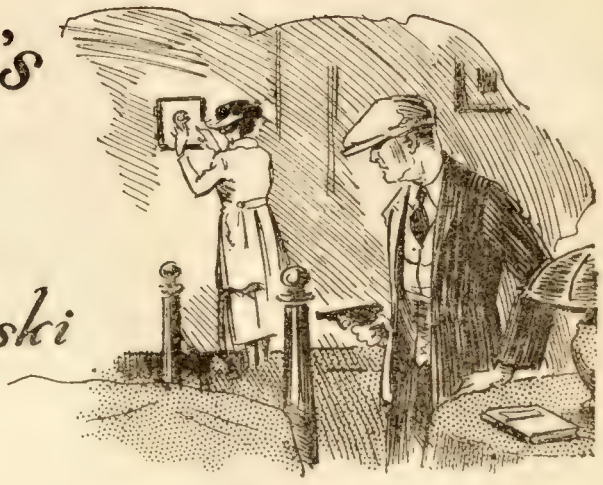
A NEW COUNTERFEIT $20 NOTE

THE Treasury Department in a circular letter announces the existence of a new counterfeit $20 Federal Reserve note. The note is described as on the Federal Reserve Bank at Atlanta, Ga., check letter H, face plate No. 33, signatures of W. G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, and John Burke, Treasurer of the United States, and portrait of Cleveland.

This counterfeit appears to have been printed from lithographic plates on paper believed to be genuine and obtained by bleaching genuine bills of smaller denominations. The bill is crudely printed, the portrait of Cleveland being particularly bad. The numbering looks as though it were by hand, and should be the means of detecting the counterfeit if examined.

Cleopatra's Sister

by Harold F. Podhaski



CHAPTER ONE

At first I was inclined to believe that the girl had evidently made some mistake, for I was quite sure she was no one I had ever seen before. And I was equally certain she was not one of that questionable type of women who frequent a place like Dornado's, and who are not adverse to picking up an acquaintance with strange men whatever be the means employed. I have not been a police reporter eight years for nothing. And then, too, a woman who was merely seeking male companionship would never have gone about it in quite so unusual a manner.

I glanced again at the briefly scribbled note the waiter had slipped into my hand.

"I wonder if you are a man who would be willing to face danger," it said, "for the sake of a woman who is in very great trouble. I judge you to be such a one or I would not be writing you this note. The waiter will show you to my table."

"Are you quite sure that this message was intended for me?" I asked doubtfully, turning to the waiter, who was still standing there beside my chair.

"Quite sure, sir," he replied, with the knowing smile of one who is accustomed to such things and takes them as a matter of course. "The young lady pointed you out very carefully, sir," he added.

"And you say that she is sitting at the fourth table on my left?"

"Yes, sir. The young lady with the brown hat on, sir."

In spite of the fact that the girl was looking directly toward me at that moment, I sat there for a time and studied the face beneath the brown hat. She caught my eye, smiled and nodded, and even at a distance I could see that there was a most attractive dimple at the corner of her mouth. I returned the greeting mechanically. She was, I believe, one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. I imagine that if I should ever write a book my heroine would possess about the same physical virtues. She did not look at all like a woman one would expect to find alone at so late an hour in a place like Dorando's. It might have been that that decided me, and then again it might have been the unresistible appeal I seemed to read in her eyes, but at any rate I presently found myself following the waiter as he led me along the aisle toward her table.

I sat down in the chair the waiter drew out for me, conscious of the fact as I did so

that a pair of most attractive blue eyes were carefully weighing me in the balance from the opposite side of the table. I hoped they would not find me wanting.

"I am glad that you decided to come," said the owner of the eyes presently, with a smile that brought into view again the dimple at the corner of her mouth. "I—I was afraid at first that you weren't," she added.

"I am glad of it myself," I declared heartily, and indeed I was, for as I looked across at the girl I found that she was even more beautiful than I had thought. The admiration in my eyes must have been a trifle too ardent, for she crimsoned slightly as she noted it. Her own eyes pleaded for my respect as she leaned across the table toward me. If there still remained any lingering doubt in my mind as to the character of this woman I banished it then once and for all.

"Please," she said, "don't—don't think ill of me, will you? I am really in great trouble. If I were not a stranger here I would have asked some one I knew to help me. But I am a stranger, and I need help so badly that I just didn't know what else to do. I—I asked you because I thought you looked like a man who would understand. You believe me, don't you?"

"Yes," I replied, "I believe you. If there is any way I can help you I shall be glad to do so."

"Thank you. I knew that you would. But it is only fair to say that if you do help me it will be necessary that you face danger—even death, perhaps. Would that make a difference?"

"None whatever. In fact, it would add spice to the adventure."

She rewarded me with a smile, and I felt my heart skip a beat as I again beheld that dimple. I would face danger any time for a smile like that.

"And you are willing to go into this thing blindly?" she asked after a moment.

"Just what do you mean by blindly?" I wanted to know.

"Well, to be absolutely frank with you about it, I wish you to help me do something that the law would regard as a crime. But I cannot tell you my reasons for doing this thing. I—I can only ask you to trust me. If you really knew what my reasons were I do not believe you would hesitate a moment."

"Suppose you tell me the exact nature of this—this undertaking," I suggested.

"The police would doubtless call it burglary," she replied. "I assure you, though," she went on quickly as she saw the sudden doubt in my eyes, "that it is really nothing of the kind. If you help me you will be doing a very worthy act, for you will be aiding the ends of justice. I pledge you my word on that."

I hesitated a moment, for what she asked was a serious thing indeed in the eyes of one who had always abided by the laws of the land. A sudden doubt seemed to shake me. What if I had been mistaken in my judgment of this girl? What if she were, after all, merely an adventuress seeking a fresh victim? But no, that could not be possible. I have seen enough of this world to know the difference between virtue and vice. There was nothing of the latter in the lovely face of this girl, in the clear blue eyes that were looking at me from across the table with such a pitiful appeal in their depths. There was witchery, too, in those eyes, an unresistible fascination. I felt myself slipping—slipping.

"All right, I'll do it," I said finally, almost roughly. "God knows why, but—but I will."

She sat there for a moment quietly while two great tears trickled from her eyes and dropped unheeded onto the white cloth. It was then that I saw how natural a thing was her beauty, for they left not even the semblance of a telltale streak to hint of the artificial.

"I—I will not try to thank you," she said after a while. "I—I can't. God knows you will never have cause to regret it. But there is still one other thing. I—I didn't speak of it before because I wanted to gain your consent first if I could without your knowing that—that you would be well compensated for your trouble."

As she finished speaking she drew from a leather bag she carried a long white envelope.

"Impossible!" I protested. "I assure you,

madam, that I ask no greater compensation than——"

She abruptly interrupted what I am sure would have proven a gallant speech.

"Please don't think that I am unappreciative," she said, "but I really must insist. There are five one-thousand dollar bills inside this envelope, and that is to be your reward for the help you give me in this undertaking."

She then tossed the envelope across the table, and it fell on the cloth directly in front of me. "Please do not open it here," she added. "It is bound to attract attention if you do."

"But really, madam," I protested, "I cannot accept this——"

"You must," she interrupted firmly. "If you do not I will have to find some one else to help me."

"Well, you could do that for considerably less than $5,000."

"Perhaps, but it is not a matter of money. With me it is strictly a business proposition, and I will leave the thing undone rather than have it otherwise. Surely you can understand my position."

"Very well," I said finally, picking up the envelope and slipping it into the inner pocket of my coat, "I will accept this money, but please understand that I do so under protest. I would give you my help just as willingly without it—perhaps even more so."

"Yes, I am sure that you would, and I want you to know that I appreciate it none the less because of the money. Some day I hope I may have the opportunity of proving that to you."

I hoped so, too, but I did not express it in words.

"When is this—this burglary to take place?" I asked.

"To-night," she replied.

I glanced at my watch, and noted that it was fifteen minutes before the hour of twelve.

"At what time? It is almost midnight now."

"My car is outside. The place we are to —to rob is in one of the suburbs, and it will take us about an hour to get there. By that time I suppose every one will be in bed and asleep."

"Are there any details to be arranged?" I asked, rather surprised at the matter-of-fact way in which I found myself discussing this project.

"Yes, there are one or two," she answered. "I have a key to one of the side doors, and we will enter the house that way. For the past three days I have been working there as a maid, and I know exactly where the thing I want is to be found. It is a bulky brown envelope, and I saw it placed in a wall safe less than five hours ago. I have the combination to that safe."

"Well, you are thorough if nothing else," I approved. "What I don't understand, though, is why you should have sought help. Working there as a maid, it seems to me you could have done this thing much easier alone."

"It was not until to-day that I was able to get hold of the combination to the safe," she explained earnestly. "I haven't a single moment to lose, for unless I secure that envelope to-night everything will be lost. The owner of the house sleeps in the same room, and the slightest disturbance awakens him. I *had* to get help because I simply cannot afford to fail."

"So be it, then," I said, resigning myself with a sigh to the spell of those blue eyes. "Let's be off. The sooner this thing is over with the better I'll like it."

CHAPTER TWO

SHE led the way out of the restaurant, and a few moments later I found myself ensconced by her side among the leather cushions of a small but exceptionally powerful roadster. The pavements gleamed wet and slippery beneath the wheels, for it had rained earlier in the night, and speed, under the circumstances, was decidedly precarious. That fact, however, seemed to give me a great deal more concern than it did the girl at the wheel. We sped southward at a clip that was dangerous to say the least, and skidded around corners in a

way that well-nigh caused me to swallow my Adam's apple on every such occasion. But she seemed to be so thoroughly familiar with the task in hand that I bore it without protest. Conversation was out of the question, and only once did we attempt it while we were still within the limits of the city.

"You are not afraid?" she asked, turning her head slightly toward me.

"Of what?" I wanted to know.

"So much speed. We have been doing almost fifty miles."

"Is *that* all? I thought it must have been a thousand at least."

She laughed, and even in the darkness I could feel the spell of that dimple.

"Please don't be afraid I will dump you out," she said reassuringly. "I have never had an accident in my life."

It occurred to me that I was more interested in the immediate future than I was in the past, but I did not give expression to the thought. Instead I lied glibly.

"Oh, I'm not afraid," I said as we turned another corner on a single pair of wheels. "Go as fast as you like."

I shortly had cause to regret my reckless statement, for when we had passed the outskirts of the city she proceeded forthwith to do that very thing. Fascinated, I watched the little black arrow on the speedometer climb slowly upward, finally reach "60," and hover in that vicinity for the space of perhaps fifteen minutes. I was just about to ask her whether our destination was the Argentine or Brazil, when she suddenly slackened speed and turned off the main highway. Just ahead I saw the darkly clustered houses of a small village, which evidently marked the end of our journey. By this time a bright summer moon had utterly dispelled the rain clouds, and as we passed a ramshackle building I presumed to be a railroad station I could read the gold-lettered name of the town quite plainly. It was Riverdale. I doubt if I was ever more gratified to reach a journey's end before in spite of the precarious undertaking that still lay ahead of me.

The girl turned low the headlights on the car, and presently we entered a winding, graveled street densely lined with trees on both its sides. A block or two of this, and she drew up at the edge of a terrace in front of what appeared to be a somewhat pretentious estate. The house itself, set well back among the trees, was almost invisible from the street, for the shadow hung about it like a velvet curtain. I could just see its dim, ghostly outlines in silhouette against the blacker background beyond.

"This is the place," whispered the girl, leaning toward me in the darkness until I could feel her breath against my cheek. "Please let me lead the way, and be as quiet as possible. We cannot afford to take any chances."

I was willing to agree there was truth in that all right, but she'd have to be more careful herself else my loudly beating heart would arouse the whole neighborhood.

"Don't worry," I assured her fervently. "I have no desire to spend the next few years of my life on a rock pile."

It was by no means a pleasant thought to dwell upon.

"There will be no danger of that if we are careful," she went on. "I—I don't suppose you have a revolver?"

"Yes, I have," I replied, then added by way of explanation: "I am a police reporter, you see, on one of the newspapers, and therefore privileged to carry a weapon. I certainly have no intention of using it, though. Burglary is quite enough without adding murder to it."

I was conscious of the fact that the girl was standing there in the darkness staring at me with wide-open eyes. It was several moments before she spoke, and when she finally did it was evident that she was laboring under some violent emotion which she was making a supreme effort to control.

"Did—did you say that you—you were a reporter?" she asked at last.

"Why, yes," I replied, wondering at the slight tremor I had seemed to notice in her tone. "Nothing remarkable about that, is there?"

"No, I—I don't suppose so. What—what paper are you with?"

"The *Times*," I answered; "but what difference does that make? Let's go ahead

and get this thing over with. I'll be developing a case of cold feet in a minute."

But still, for some strange reason or other, she seemed to hesitate. I wondered at the time if she herself might have suddenly become afflicted with the ailment I had mentioned. I hoped so certainly with all my heart, for nothing would have pleased me more than to back out of this thing while the backing was yet good. Presently, however, she banished her fears, if fears indeed they were, and bidding me follow, she turned toward a gravel driveway that apparently led past the house.

In spite of the fact that the moon above was doing its utmost to dispel the gloom there among those trees, it failed utterly in the effort. The darkness was uncanny, like that of a windowless tomb with the door closed. At any rate, I imagine so, though I have never gone inside of a windowless tomb and closed the door. I probably never will. I assure you, though, that much as I disliked this project an unkind fate had led me into, I was really glad when we finally reached the house.

From the small leather bag she carried my partner in crime produced a key, and in another moment we had become felons in the eyes of the law.

We stood there for a time in the darkness listening, but only the monotonous ticking of a clock somewhere near by, the distant barking of a dog, broke the silence. Somehow the rhythmic tick, tick, tick of that clock seemed to remind me of the steady tread of feet in lockstep. Had I suited the action to my inclinations as that thought occurred to me, I would have taken my departure forthwith by the way I had come, and it was only by a desperate effort of will that I managed to keep from doing so. Some intuition must have told the girl what I was thinking about, for I felt the pressure of her fingers upon my arm, felt her warm breath against my cheek again as she leaned toward me.

"Courage, my friend," she whispered softly. "It will all be over very shortly. Come."

She led the way toward the front of the house and stopped presently at the foot of a broad staircase leading upward to the floor above.

"Up here," she whispered. "Please be careful not to make any noise."

She started upward, and I followed close at her heels. I never knew before that climbing a flight of stairs was such a frightfully noisy undertaking. Every step seemed to creak and groan beneath my weight until I feared the unearthly racket must surely arouse the household. But we finally reached the top without mishap, and I found myself in what appeared to be a long, wide hallway. There were a number of doors on both sides of it, and just outside one of these my fellow burglar stopped again and turned toward me in the semi-darkness.

"This is the room," she said softly. "While I am getting what I came for out of the safe you keep an eye on the man who sleeps in this room. If he should waken cover him with your revolver, and I don't think he'll make any disturbance. He'll probably take us for ordinary burglars. But whatever you do, for heaven's sake don't shoot."

"Don't worry," I whispered back. "I won't."

She gave my arm a final pressure, and the touch of her fingers thrilled me, filled me with a strange sense of delight. I had never known before that there could be such magic in the spell of a woman's touch. Even now just the thought of it thrills me as I sit here in my study and write these lines, poor, fatuous fool that I am.

Slowly, softly she turned the knob of the door, and in less time than it takes to tell of it here we were inside the room. In one corner stood a massive oaken bed, from which emanated the sonorous breathing of a man asleep. The moonlight fell in a lustrous streak across the covers at his feet, but his face lay in the shadow, and I could see but its dim outline against the white pillow.

The safe which the girl had mentioned was in the wall on the opposite side of the room, and as she busied herself over the combination I moved closer to the bed. With my hand upon the butt of the revolver

in my coat pocket, I stood there at the foot of it, every nerve atingle, a fervent prayer in my heart that he might not awaken.

And after a time I became conscious of the fact that there was something about the face of the man that seemed vaguely familiar. I could see its features but dimly, for one corner of the bed cast a dense shadow across the pillow on which he lay, but still I could have sworn that he was some one I knew, some one with whom I came in contact in my everyday life. Had I dared do so I would have struck a match and peered more closely at that shadowy face, but the possible consequence of such recklessness forbade it.

Finally I heard the soft step of the girl as she came toward me from the opposite side of the room, and as I turned toward her I saw that she was holding the brown envelope clutched tightly in one hand. With the other she beckoned me to follow, and I needed no second bidding.

We had just reached the door and were on the point of passing through it into the hallway when suddenly a most startling thing occurred. I do not expect that I shall live to be as old as Methuselah, but if I should I am quite sure nothing will ever happen again in my life that will cause me any greater surprise.

With my hand on the knob of the door I heard the sound of a voice from the corner of the room. At first I thought that the man on the bed had awakened, and as I stood there just inside the door I felt the blood run cold in my veins. And then, when I heard the voice again, I knew that it was only the fretful mumble of a man whose slumbers are disturbed by dreams. But it was not the sound of his voice that so startled me, though it did occur to me at the time that the tone of it seemed vaguely familiar. Only once did he say anything at all intelligible, and it was *what* he said that gave me such a turn.

"Why, yes," he muttered, "it was Sheldon—Bradford Sheldon."

That was all, and then the voice trailed off again into an indistinct jumble. But it was quite sufficient, permit me to assure you, to have upset even a less emotional person than myself—for my own name happens to be Bradford Sheldon.

Somehow I don't seem to remember just what happened during the next five minutes. I have a vague knowledge of some one taking me by the hand, leading me down the stairs, out of the house, along a darkly shaded driveway. I seem to remember, too, having climbed into an automobile, but it was not until we had left the suburb of Riverdale behind us that my brain began to function again in its normal way. It was, I believe, the girl's voice asking me a question that brought me back to my senses.

"What in the world is the matter with you?" she wished to know. "You act like a man in a dream."

"I think I am," I replied. "Pinch me, will you? Right there on the arm."

I held out my arm, and she nipped it with a violence that assured me of the fact I was never more awake in my life.

"You surely haven't lost your nerve, have you?" she asked.

"No, it isn't that, either," I assured her. "Did you hear what that man said just as we were getting out of the room?"

"Yes, and it upset me for a moment, too. But he was only talking in his leep. I don't see why——"

"It was *what* he said that upset *me*," I interrupted. "Did you hear the name he spoke—Bradford Sheldon?"

"Yes, I seem to remember that he did mention such a name."

"Well, you can understand why it should have had such an effect on me then when I tell you that my own name is Bradford Sheldon."

I never expect to be any closer to eternity than I was during the next few seconds and still live to tell of it. We were traveling at a forty-mile clip at least, when the car suddenly swerved to the right, missed the fence by a scant few inches, and then followed a zigzag course for some forty or fifty yards that came within the well-known hair's breadth of ending in disaster at least half a dozen times. It will always be a profound mystery to me just how I escaped

with nothing more serious than a shattered morale before she finally regained her control of the wheel.

"For heaven's sake!" I exclaimed, when I had managed to recover my breath. "What in the world are you trying to do, kill us both?"

"Forgive me," she begged. "I—I had a sudden attack of nerves, I guess. But—but did you say that—that you were Bradford Sheldon?"

"Why, yes," I replied, "I did. But why should that upset you?"

"Oh, it wasn't that at all," she answered quickly. "It—it was something entirely different."

Her tone was a trifle too eager to be convincing, but as she was evidently very anxious to have me believe it, I decided not to pursue the subject further. Somehow, though, I could not get the idea out of my mind that it *was* the knowledge of my identity that had upset her, and I was even more convinced of it when I presently became aware of the fact that she appeared to be making a supreme effort to keep from laughing.

Covertly watching her out of the corner of my eye, I saw that the corners of her mouth were twitching nervously, and once or twice I could have sworn that she gritted her teeth. I was positive—*absolutely* positive in fact—that had she followed her inclinations her emotion would have manifested itself in laughter. She succeeded, however, in holding it in check, and though I would have given much to have understood its cause, I said nothing to her about it.

The remainder of our trip back to the city was accomplished without event. The girl insisted upon depositing me in front of my own quarters, and, too weary to offer much of a protest, I finally agreed to that arrangement.

I stood there at the edge of the curb for a moment after we had parted and watched the tail lights of her car disappear in a red streak around a near-by corner. And then—and not until then—did it occur to me that she had not even told me her name.

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN I awoke the following morning I was at first inclined to believe that my adventure of the night before had been nothing more than a fanciful dream. But I shortly dismissed that thought from my mind, for the thing was too indelibly stamped in my memory to permit of belief in its unreality. I glanced at my watch, and noting that it was almost eleven, I began hurriedly to dress, for while Hamilton was one of the best-natured city editors in the world it was not likely that he would overlook an hour's tardiness. And I stood to be even later than that, for I was due at the office by ten o'clock.

On sundry previous occasions when I had happened to oversleep I had usually managed to evade notice by the simple expedient of leaving the elevator at the third floor and completing the journey to the city room on the fourth by way of the stairs. But on this occasion that bit of strategy failed utterly in its purpose, for the eagle eye of my friend Hamilton spotted me the instant I entered the room. As I approached his desk in response to his beckoning finger, I observed at once that something of a far more serious nature than my tardiness was evidently weighing upon his mind.

"Sit down, Sheldon," he ordered in a peremptory tone that was not at all like his usual self. "You and I are going to the mat right now."

I started to offer some sort of an explanation to account for my tardiness, but he quickly interrupted me.

"I'm not thinking about that at all," he declared. "It's that franchise graft story you got the other day out of Ferguson. I thought you told me that no other paper in town could get that story."

"Well, I did," I replied, wondering what he was driving at. "Ferguson told me so at the time. I don't think that either the *Journal* or the *Record* have a chance in the world of getting that story unless they rehash the thing after we use it. You know as well as I do that for political reasons Ferguson would do any favor he could for the *Times*. Well, he's the only one who knows

the inside story of that franchise graft business, and he's given that story to us. I'll stake anything I possess that neither of the other papers can get it."

"When did you write the story?"

"I gave it to the old man last Tuesday morning. What's his idea in holding it up so long, anyhow?"

"Political reasons, of course."

"But the story's true," I protested. "That's the first time I've ever known the old man to let his political prejudices influence the news columns."

"Well, he doesn't ordinarily, but such a story would naturally give the present administration a mighty black eye. He's been preparing a long editorial to run the same day in order to counteract the effect the story itself might have on the public. He called me up last night at home, and ordered four columns left open on the front page of the last home edition this afternoon. Your story was to run in two of the columns, and the editorial in the other two."

"Why are you worrying about any of the other papers getting the story, then?" I demanded. "If we run it in the last home edition it's a scoop for us, isn't it? The best they can do is put out an extra, and they're not likely to do that on a rehashed story."

"Evidently you haven't seen a copy of the *Journal* this morning. They've had an extra on the street for two hours with the whole story spread across the front page."

"But—but I don't understand. How could the *Journal* have gotten the story?"

"The whole thing is written around Ferguson's statement. Evidently he has double-crossed us."

"I don't believe it," I declared. "That isn't like Ferguson at all."

"Well, look for yourself, then. Here's a copy of the extra."

I spread the paper out upon the desk in front of me. As Hamilton had said the story occupied a large part of the front page, for type had been used in the body of it that was but little less than headline size. It included, too, a fac-simile reproduction of a signed statement by Ferguson, and I was astonished to note that word for word it was evidently the same statement he had given to me four days before. Being an anti-administration newspaper, and not one adverse to the practice of mud slinging, the story of course gave the *Journal* an excellent opportunity to wield the lash, and they made the most of it.

And then as I began to read the story I made a most startling discovery. With the exception of the first two or three introductory paragraphs and an occasional addition here and there throughout the body of it, it was undoubtedly the very story I had written myself. I read the whole thing to make sure of it, and I knew that I could not possibly be mistaken.

"Look here, Fred," I said, turning to Hamilton when I had finished reading, "there's been dirty work some place. That's the very story I wrote myself and gave to the old man last Tuesday."

"You—you are quite sure of it?" he demanded incredulously.

"Absolutely," I assured him. "I'll swear to it if necessary. They've added quite a bit to it, but substantially it's my story, word for word."

"Good Lord! They must have stolen the thing, then, some time last night. The old man had it when he called me up. Said he would send it down with the editorial before noon to-day."

"But surely they wouldn't go as far as that, would they?"

"My boy, the *Journal* would go to *any* lengths to serve their political ends. Don't fool yourself on that score for a minute. I'll call up the old man right away and ask him about it."

He took down the receiver of the phone. I shall probably never again receive so great a shock as I did when I heard the number that he asked for.

"Riverdale, 745."

A terrible suspicion flashed instantly into my mind.

"Say, Fred," I demanded hoarsely as he awaited a reply from the other end of the wire, "does—does the old man live in—in Riverdale?"

"Yes," he replied. "Bought a new home out there about a month ago."

Whereupon the suspicion gave way to

something decidedly more definite—a realization of the actual truth, of the unbelievable thing that had really happened.

Like one in a dream I listened to Hamilton as he carried on an excitable conversation with the owner of the *Times* on the opposite end of the wire. If there still existed in my breast a tiny spark of hope his first words smothered it. He turned toward me again when he had finished talking and hung the receiver back upon its hook.

"Well, that's exactly what happened, Sheldon," he said. "The thing was evidently stolen some time last night. The old man found it out just before I phoned. He had the story and the editorial in a brown envelope in his safe, and the brown envelope appears to have flown the coop. One of the maids happens to be missing, too—a new girl they hired three days ago. Put two and two together and you've got the answer."

Believe me, I could have told him the answer without going to the trouble of putting two and two together, but of course I didn't. Instead I bethought myself of the long white envelope I still carried in my pocket and which as yet remained unopened.

"There are five one-thousand-dollar bills inside this envelope, and that is to be your reward for the help you give me in this undertaking," were the exact words she had used when she tossed it on the table in front of me. Well, it was easily worth that sum all right if it was worth a nickel, but as to finding $5,000 inside that envelope—perish the hope. I cherished no doubts whatever on that score.

A few moments later when I had managed to get away from Hamilton I went over to one of the desks in a far corner of the room, where I could satisfy my curiosity unobserved by inquisitive eyes. I ripped open the flap and drew from the envelope something that had very much the appearance of money. It *was* money. Crisp new currency in the form of five crinkly greenbacks. But the only difference between one of *these* greenbacks and a $1,000 bill was a little matter of $999.

Oh, well, so be it. When they fool guys like Mark Antony what can a poor rookie like me expect?

"OLD IKE"

ISAAC VAIL, or "Old Ike," as he was more familiarly known to the police and the fraternity of confidence men, of which he was a shining member, was arrested in Hoboken. He was remanded for further examination and sentenced. Vail's old field of action was the North German Lloyd line's piers in Hoboken. On sailing days he would put in an appearance a few hours before the time of departure and, satchel in hand, walk on board the steamer. An acquaintanceship with a prosperous-looking passenger would soon be struck up, and this he would follow with an invitation to go ashore and take a drink of bootleg. On the way to the saloon Vail would convey the information that he would stop for his wife at a neighboring hotel and take her aboard. When the saloon was reached a confederate, in the shape of a highly excited man, would arrive and announce to Vail that his wife was waiting for him to come and settle the hotel bill. Then Vail would be horrified to find that he had nothing in his pocket-book but a large check which he had forgotten to cash. This he would give to his victim as "security" for a loan of $50 or so, "the amount of the hotel bill," and then hurry off not to return, and the victim would discover that the check was worthless. The marshal had several of these checks in his possession and found them strong evidence against Vail.

Vail was known to the police in nearly every large city in the country. He was fifty-three years old and dressed in a quiet, gentlemanly style. His face and manner were those of a refined and well-educated man. He came of an excellent family, which had long since cast him off. He was not particular in his choice of people on whom to operate, and the list of his victims included immigrants, sea captains and farmers.

The Shadow Dance

by

Donna Reith Scott

THE try-out was to be at nine o'clock in the morning. Through the subdued night clamor of the city came the sound of a clock striking two. Eugene Tressler swept a mass of manuscript across his table and buried his fingers in his brown hair in despair. The alluring strain singing in his brain would not connect.

Several months ago he had received a commission to write the music—an opera—to a libretto of pulsating beauty, and but a few hours remained to finish it. He had but to write a dance-song and a short finale.

Two weeks ago, while composing more difficult parts of the opera, the strain for the dance-song had come to him. Throughout the two weeks he had devoted a portion of each night to it, but had made no further progress than to add a few disconnected phrases.

His eyes turned toward the piano, on whose top in a neat stack lay the completed parts. He swung across the rug, almost hidden with crumpled efforts, and flopped down before the instrument. Noticing his door leading into the hall was slightly ajar, he rose and closed it.

In fear of disturbing his fellow tenants in the great apartment-house, he pressed the soft pedal and, barely touching the keys, played a musical sentence. He endeavored to connect the strain and the isolated phrases, but failed.

Success was almost within his grasp. He would not fail if he could write this dance-song and a good finale! He slowly got up and paced the floor. Over and over he thought: here at twenty-eight was his chance for recognition, and he was about to fail. Only a few hours stood between him and nine o'clock.

He moved toward the open window to cool his throbbing forehead, and gazed unobservingly at the spring sky, at the moon and a star which hung beside it, at the twinkling lines of downtown streets and the piled buildings. In the windows here and there shone dim lights. In his immediate vicinity the buildings were dark. Something, however, in the near distance to his right, something he seemed to glimpse from the corner of his eyes, was moving in the sky. Without real interest he turned his face toward a low, narrow store between two gigantic ones. Back of the low structure, framed in the gloom, was an oblong glow, like an open door pouring out gold.

He leaned against the casing and subconsciously noted that over the shining aperture a shadow flickered. While he gazed the shadow grew larger, more distinct, until it became that of a slender girl with long

unbound hair swaying, swirling, dipping. Gradually, then quickly, his senses became cognizant that she was dancing in exquisite rhythm. In a roused attitude he watched the shadow recede and come forward again, holding her arms aloft, dancing in graceful, whirling abandon.

Ecstatically he wrung his hands and hung his tall form dangerously out in the air as he realized that she was enacting the form and rhythm of an embryo melody that had refused to be born.

He snatched music paper and pencil and, watching the shadow, translated phrase after phrase. As she danced the melody and color beat into his brain. He imprisoned the sunny poetry of motion into written notes.

Each time the central theme returned the dance took on dainty frills like the motive in music recurring embellished. After a few minutes the dance rose to a culminating point, the tempo grew slower and slower, and finally, with a motion of arms and shoulders, died away in a repetition of softer and softer tremolo.

While his imagination pictured the sounds faster than his speeding fingers could record them the shadow vanished, the oblong of gold disappeared.

His brain and heart were aflame. Lost to all sense of reality, he sunk into a delicious dream. The lights and the darkness, the stars and the moon, the medley of structures swung about him. Among it all he saw a vision of himself treading a flower-strewn path of wealth and fame with the girl of the shadow-dance on his arm.

He shook himself free of this dream and laughed. "Only the finale now!"

Immediately a brisk melody began to make itself clear. His attention was attracted to a long row of lights flashing out far beneath the former one, apparently on the ground floor.

A projection on the low building partly hid his view of the under portion of the windows. He pushed the table close to the sill and knelt on it.

Presently he was rewarded, the shadow of a little thrown-back head and part of a shoulder wavered past. As more and more of it became visible he saw that there were two figures moving, one a man.

A sharp pang of disappointment shook him. The shadow-girl had reached across the spaces to help him. She seemed to belong to him.

In a few seconds, however, his overpowering creative talent overcame his depression. He prepared to write, while the girl in the arms of the man turned, twisted, bent in rapid motion, like one trying to escape the grasp of a demon.

The man struggled, pushed, jerked and twirled, determined she should not escape.

"Heavens! what a finale!" Eugene gasped. "The Sunbeam whirled away in the embrace of the Storm."

"Grand!" he kept repeating as he looked up from time to time from his racing fingers at the swaying reflections.

As the surging, clinching and wrenching went on Eugene's countenance became as demon-like as the motion and the changing rhythm he was crystallizing into the beauty of tone-pictures. He wove into it emphatic accents, crashing chords and vigorous chromatic windings.

Suddenly the shadowed windows grew dark, indistinguishable. He placed a chair at the table, drew the manuscript toward him and attempted to begin the orchestration. After a short interval, exhausted, spent with emotion, his head drooped and fell upon his arms on the table.

He lay there until the dull gray-green waves began to wash over the sky and a pale streak of daylight settled on his head. Then he awoke, and with heavy eyes stared across to where he had seen the framed glow. There a weatherbeaten, gloomy, colorless warehouse was forming itself in the pushing dawn.

Uncomprehensibly he viewed it and the manuscript under his elbow. A harassing question came: "Did I see wonderful, interpretative dancing in the small hours of the night, or did I imagine it?" he asked himself.

He winced and alternately stared at the warehouse and at the manuscript. He picked up the latter; it was all recorded—a lilting dance, and a picturesque, savage,

pulsating one, just as he had dreamed of writing them.

He leaned over to begin the corrections, but could not concentrate, and tossed the pages from him. The lamp was still burning; he jerked the chain. In the semi-dawn the rose colors of the room appeared dull, faded, cold.

He shivered. Tormenting thoughts took possession of him anew. "Was the lovely dancing girl a hallucination? Was I sane?" He pressed his hands to his hot forehead. Abruptly he held his dizzy head erect. "I'll know if it were a real dance, a real living, breathing girl," he muttered, "or an invention of a tortured imagination!"

Hatless, attired in corduroy trousers and a smoking-jacket, he let himself down to the street in the automatic elevator and rushed along through the early morning mist.

He darted into a cobble-stoned alley, and soon the warehouse towered before him, great, gray, silent.

Outside the door marked "office" he hesitated. He turned the knob. It was locked. He rapped loudly; not a sound, however, from the inside greeted him. A surface car jangled near. It turned a corner. In the lull he fancied he heard a groan. He strainedly listened. All was quiet. He rapped again, and was sure he was answered by a quivering sigh.

Now he noted that the window next the door was raised. Instantly he jumped from the step to the sill and swung himself inside.

Slowly in the hazy interior objects took form; there were overturned chairs, roll-top desks, spilled waste-paper baskets on a green rug.

All was quiet except for his own timid footsteps. Presently he saw in a corner a large safe. Beside it lay a dark heap. His eyes dilated. He had discerned a white hand and arm amid the heap.

He bent over a young woman dressed in black silk. A long mass of dusky hair lay disheveled over her face and shoulders. "The dancer with a poet's soul," he breathed.

He brushed back the hair from her face. Dried blood, coming from an abrasion just beneath her temple, stained a cheek as creamy and satiny as a magnolia blossom.

He fell back for a moment, overcome with self-accusation. The demon-like dance interpreted itself. He had joyfully, idiotically, unthinkingly transmitted her suffering, her despair, her possible cry for mercy to his music. The mystery of why she was here or who had attacked her he could not understand. If he hadn't been mad, he thought, he might have saved her.

In a corner was a drinking fountain. He carried her to it, wet his handkerchief and dabbed it on her face.

After several touches of the cold cloth her eyelashes fluttered half open, closed and then fluttered again. Gradually she opened big, dazed black eyes.

He smiled reassuringly into them. "Poor girl," he murmured compassionately, "tell me what shall——"

Before he could complete his question pain filled the beautiful eyes, the lashes drooped; she was again unconscious.

Frantically he telephoned to a hospital for an ambulance, telling them that he had found a girl, injured, insensible, in the warehouse.

In the next ten minutes Eugene wet her face many times and chafed her hands, but she remained motionless.

A loud clang announced the ambulance. Eugene remembered the locked door, and staggered to the window, carrying the senseless burden. He called to the stretcher-bearers coming toward the entrance:

"This way. The door is locked."

Shortly the girl was placed on the stretcher and borne toward the ambulance.

Before Eugene could follow several patrolmen mounted the sill, examined him with lowered brows, and then began to inspect the surroundings.

"I'm going with her," Eugene explained, stepping over the sill.

Two policemen grasped him, one on either shoulder.

"What's this for?" he demanded angrily.

An unpleasant laugh was the only reply.

"What's this for?" he repeated.

"Cut out the bull," advised one.

"That don't go about findin' her here," said the other, his eyes on the small head of the young woman disappearing into the vehicle.

"Just the same, it's the truth," flared Eugene. "I'd like to go to the hospital to see that she gets proper care."

"Don't be in a hurry," answered the shorter of the two policemen as the ambulance started away.

"All I know is that first I saw her shadow on the top-story window in an exquisite dance," began Eugene. "Later I——"

"Ha-ha," the taller policeman laughed. "Where?"

"In the warehouse!"

"Acts dippy," insinuated the other. "No use askin' questions till he's investigated."

"Nerves!" said the other. "Guilty of somethin'."

Eugene ignored these pointed remarks. "I insist upon knowing on what charge I am being arrested!" he demanded.

"S'pose we move along an' find out," was the laconic reply.

At the police-station the desk sergeant asked him the customary questions: his name, address, occupation. The latter he gave as professional musician. He was asked to give an account of his presence in the warehouse and what he knew about the injured girl.

He related the circumstances of the dances and his desire to find the girl and satisfy himself as to his own sanity. Also how, after finding the girl, he realized that the wild dance had been a struggle.

The sleepy sergeant smiled once or twice, but made no other comment than to order him taken to an inner room.

Here he was searched. Several notebooks, their pages scribbled with music and poetical expressions, were found in his pockets, but nothing that the police could construe as incriminating.

Eugene sat down to await, as patiently as he could, the girl's regaining consciousness or the investigation which would show that he had told the truth—the truth as far as he knew.

After what seemed a long time to him Captain Ryan, red-haired, freckled, big, coming on duty earlier than usual, sauntered through the doorway.

"Good-morning," he said. He was about to take a seat near Eugene when he was called to the telephone.

Instinctively some of the telephone conversation filtered in to Eugene.

"Miss—is that so? More suspicious. We're holding—— Good-by." The receiver was hung up.

The captain began to speak to a fellow officer.

"Girl's been identified," Eugene heard. "Head doctor's a friend of hers." The next words were a mumble. Then dismally he heard: "Put him in a cell. That gag about writing an opera and the girl dancin' is all rot."

A few minutes later he was an occupant of a cell.

Soon the captain came and paused outside the bars.

"Who are you writin' this opera for?" he questioned carelessly.

"Norman J. Poliadia."

"Oh!" The captain moved away.

After thirty minutes had dragged by Eugene heard a rushing sweep in the corridor. The opera manager, Norman J. Poliadia, quick-acting, gray-haired, fashionably dressed, dashed against the iron grating.

"Well, well, my boy," he fumed, "what's this confounded thing that the police——"

The captain brushed close, and the manager paused in his impulsive speech. "How are you, Ryan," he said brusquely. "What crazy work is this?"

The other shrugged his shoulders and turned the key in the lock.

"Go in; hear his side of it."

The manager entered the cell and, each sitting on the edge of the cot, Eugene related the tale of the shadow-dance again. As he went on his visitor looked first apprehensive, and then perceptibly worried, often waving a big white silk handkerchief like a flag.

Eugene felt sure the manager would understand, would say something to give him comfort. Instead he shook his head, searching Eugene with mystified expression in his eyes. He sighed.

"There's some mistake, 'Gene. You must have been asleep, dreaming or—or——" He beckoned to the captain, passing. "I'll bail him out."

"Better wait until the girl gets conscious and tells who attempted her life and how she came to be there," suggested the officer, glancing significantly at the other. To this Mr. Poliadia seemed to acquiesce.

Eugene felt that they both thought him unbalanced. Harassing thoughts came trooping back. "Could it be possible that in a delirium——" He shook off these thoughts, remembering that he had never seen the girl until he had found her in the warehouse. He spoke aloud. "Never mind about me, Mr. Poliadia, the opera——"

"Yes, yes."

"The finished parts are on the piano; on the table are 'The Sunbeam' and 'The Embrace of the Storm.'"

Mr. Poliadia looked a little askance.

"Oh, I know they are there," insisted Eugene, "exactly as I saw her dance them."

Mr. Poliadia glanced at his watch.

"Nine o'clock. The orchestra is assembling now. I'll run up, 'Gene, and get it myself."

"The door is unlocked. The shadow-dances——"

"Get your mind on something else, my boy."

"I merely wanted to say if I had them here I could orches——"

"You can't have them. You've been working too hard. Try and sleep. Matters will straighten out." He shook Eugene's hand. "I'll send you some breakfast and let you know the decision, my boy."

Eugene fell into a troubled sleep, from which the shrill noon whistles awoke him. With a pang he had just come to a realization of his position when the manager dashed in, radiant, bubbling, his body expressive of the utmost joy. Ringing the prisoner's hands, he exulted: "Magnificent! The duets, the choruses, magnificent! The shadow-dances captivating, sublime. The storm dance proclaims you a great dramatic artist. Only a sane man could write such stuff!"

"I—I——" began Eugene. The manager was not listening, but a keeper dragged him from the cell.

"Miss Burt is conscious. Ryan is waiting for you in the machine. You are to be taken to her for identification. Nothing to worry about, my boy. Peculiar circumstances. Come to the theatre as soon as you are released."

"Is she better?" Eugene asked. "Is that her name? She's the great artist, not I?"

With a laugh the manager handed Eugene into the machine.

A chilly rain was falling. Eugene's overcoat and hat lay on the seat. He thanked the manager.

As Eugene and a police captain entered the reception-room of the hospital the elderly chief doctor was taking leave of two lady acquaintances. He surmised their errand. "Miss Burt is asleep," he said.

"It would only take a moment," began the captain.

"No one shall disturb her," insisted the physician. "It's a natural sleep which betokens rapid recovery."

"Has she told anything?" asked the captain.

"No. I wouldn't allow her to talk. She was struck on the head with a blunt instrument. There is no fracture, merely a deep cut and shock to her nervous system. Her heart is not overstrung."

Eugene flushed with embarrassment when the officer, indicating him, explained: "This man is accused——"

"He can be accused a while longer," the doctor interrupted gruffly. "You can come in when I decide."

"As I am innocent, I'm satisfied to wait," said Eugene. "I wouldn't retard her recovery for worlds. Such a wonderful dancer!"

"'Dancer,'" repeated the doctor, moving through the door; "that isn't her profession."

Soon a pretty nurse announced: "Miss Burt is awake and prepared to see you."

Eugene was agitated with a commingling of emotions as they softly stepped into the sick room. Miss Burt lay among the pillows, the square of dressing on her temple no whiter than her piquant face. Violet color circled her eyes, and her dusky hair

was arranged in two long plaits. Her big whimsical eyes met his and flashed a pleased recognition.

The captain placed himself at the foot of the bed, notebook and pencil in hand. "Miss Burt," he pointed at Eugene with his pencil, "is this the man who assaulted you?"

Her eyes grew wide, disappointed. She turned toward Eugene. "Is that why you are here, Mr. Tressler?"

Astonished at hearing his name, he was about to reply when she turned toward the police captain. "Decidedly Mr. Tressler is not the man! What a strange thing to arrest——"

Eugene's face was mirroring his happy mood. "It's not of the slightest consequence, Miss Burt. Please——"

"How were you injured? How came you to be in the warehouse?" intervened the captain.

The elderly doctor came in and stood close by.

She smiled, her eyelids drooped, her breath came a trifle short. "I was struck on the head."

Her physician patted her hair with a restraining hand. "Calmness, Elsie," he admonished her, "or the interview will be closed."

"I'll be good," she promised, flinging up her hand. A perpetual laugh seemed to be hovering on her lips and in her eyes, which was with difficulty held in check.

"Who—how—what were you doin' in the warehouse?" the captain asked, stumbling in his eagerness to forestall further interruptions.

The laugh broke out, weak and sweet. "Getting material," she replied. "Got a brand I wasn't searching for."

" 'Material,' " the captain echoed. "What kind of material?"

"For a story."

"Oh—oh—I see."

"Story," Eugene exclaimed. "But the dance?"

" 'Dance?' " she repeated.

"Didn't you dance," he faltered, an undertone of pleading in his voice, "about three o'clock?"

A glimmer of reminiscence passed over her face. "I—oh—yes."

Captain Ryan sat down in a rocking-chair in an attitude eloquent of boredom. "Who—how——" he began.

Miss Burt wasn't listening. She leaned toward Eugene, a puzzled smile on her face. "I danced. How did you know?"

"I saw the shadow on the window."

"Oh," she breathed. "Where were you?"

"In my room. Now the exquisite dance is in my opera—the most beautiful part. It——"

"Actually?" She sighed happily. "Then at last you got it!"

"What——"

Captain Ryan wedged in his question, "Miss Burt, will you please tell us about your assailant?"

"Of course I'll tell. It was, as I said, to get material."

The captain nodded with ill-concealed impatience.

"I'll explain briefly. I am writing a story of a girl alone at midnight in a great barracks, terror-stricken. I had never been in a position of that kind and couldn't get the proper atmosphere.

"The old watchman at the warehouse, for some reason or other, is an admirer of my work. Last night I went there and cajoled him into allowing me to watch for the night, punch the clock, etc. I wanted to be entirely alone in the gloomy place. He wasn't feeling well, so it didn't take much persuasion to get him to go home."

She paused to rest. Every one waited, breathing a little harder, as though they were viewing a play and the thread of the mystery was about to be unwound.

"About four o'clock," she resumed, "I came down into the office. I snapped on the lights. A slim fellow with a cloth over his mouth and nose was crouching beside a desk."

"Go on," the captain urged as she broke off. "You saw a slim fellow."

She nodded. "I screamed. He sprang toward me, while I fled to the window, thinking I could call for help. Not a sound would come."

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"The storm-dance," cut in Eugene excitedly.

"Go on, Miss Burt," the officer begged, surveying the composer murderously.

"We fought desperately for possession of the weapon in his hand; he trying to knock me senseless with the butt end, I striving to wring it from his grasp. I think he was a burglar."

She ceased to speak and sank lower among the pillows.

"In the struggle I knocked off his cap and saw he had queer, lemon-colored hair."

"Sim Jenkins, the second-story man!" exclaimed the officer, tapping his notebook. "Sure as thunder!"

"He got the better of it, and struck me on the head with the revolver. I felt myself dropping, falling through endless space. I knew nothing more until Mr. Tressler picked me up. Next I was lying here."

"The safe was not touched. Sim evidently thought you was some kinda ghost," explained the officer. "Thanks, Miss Burt. Tressler, you are free."

He left the room, while Eugene remained rooted to the spot.

"May I ask Miss Burt a few questions?" he inquired of the doctor.

"I'll give you five minutes," warned the latter as he and the nurse edged through the doorway.

Eugene moved the rocking-chair and sat down near the girl. "Referring to the sunbeam-dance," he said.

"I'll tell you about it," she said, laughing. "Evening after evening when I tried to write you began a strain on the piano; in fact, the beginning of several strains. Always you failed to connect. I knew you were writing music, because I'd tried it myself. I've dabbled in all the arts."

"Yes, yes," replied her listener. "But—but where do you live?"

"In the apartment below yours," she answered.

"Impossible!"

"Indeed, yes! I longed to help you. Last evening, before going to the warehouse, I came to your door, intending to offer my services. Your door was partly open. You were muttering, and—and tearing your hair." With a smile she concluded: "After a little I hadn't the courage to intrude."

"Sometimes, unaware, an angel——"

"In the warehouse the strain persisted; there was a great vacant floor, and I determined to dance it out."

"You spoke to me so wonderfully across the spaces," he muttered.

The nurse put her head in the doorway and held up five fingers.

Miss Burt glanced at him like a mischievous child.

"I'll speak to you every chance I get," he said. "Would you like to have me call this evening?"

An apple-blossom tint slowly mounted her cheeks, but she laughed frankly. "Certainly," she said.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.

[redacted]

18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by E. Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thomas J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Anderson.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
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82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "The Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. F. Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Lost Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
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104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
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111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.

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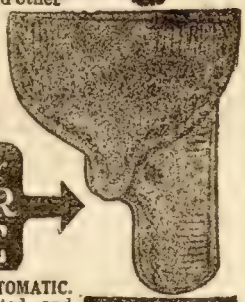

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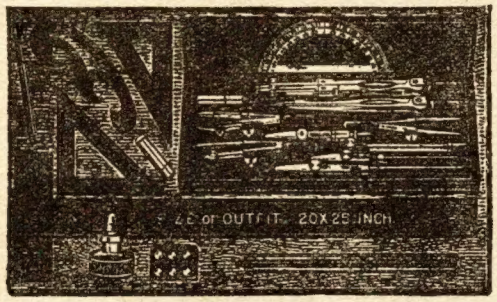

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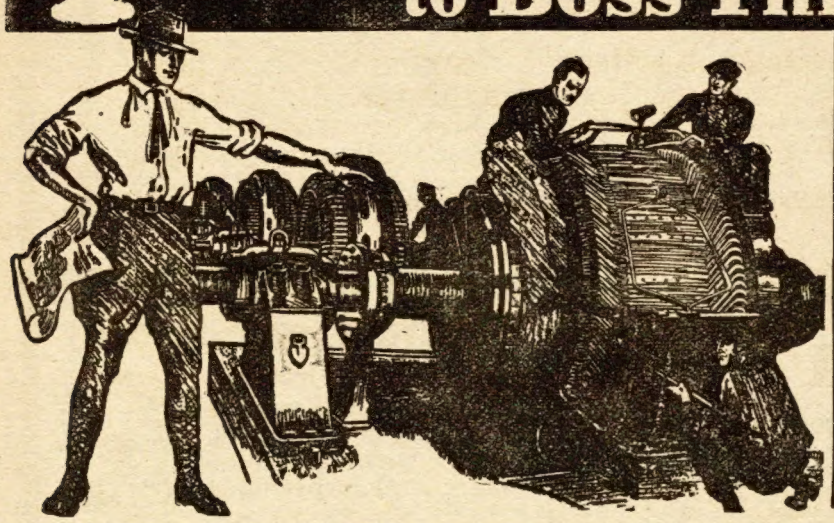

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